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**An Edition of Richard Bernard's Ruths Recompence**  
**Arlene McAlister**

**Volume 1**

**PhD**

**The University of Edinburgh**

**2012**



**Declaration**

I declare that I have composed this thesis, and the work is my own. It has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.



## **Abstract**

This thesis consists of annotations and an introduction which constitute an edition of Richard Bernard's Ruths Recompence (1628). This edition aims to provide a more modern and accurate (though clarified) text than the nineteenth-century edition edited by Alexander Balloch Grosart (1865). It also sets out to offer a more comprehensive interpretation with an emphasis on a subject prominent in Bernard's commentary passed over in silence by Grosart, that is, the issues relating to women's conduct raised by Ruth's approach to Boaz alone by night in Ruth chapter 3.

The text of this edition has been produced by applying Optical Character Recognition to a copy of the 1628 edition in my possession. In presenting the text, an editorial policy has been consistently followed, which is described in the Textual Introduction. The main objective is to reproduce the original as closely as possible at the same time as making the work accessible to the modern reader.

In the early modern period much was written about women's conduct and how they ought to behave. Ruths Recompence provides a specifically puritan perspective on this issue. In the introduction, various kinds of literature about women in the early modern period, such as conduct books and lives of women, are surveyed in order to show the context in which Bernard addressed the conduct of Ruth and Naomi. The editorial framework also analyses Bernard's developing and to some extent censorious evaluation of the women's behaviour. Another subject relating to women's conduct addressed, chiefly in the introduction, is breast-feeding. Bernard's views are related to those expressed by the preceding commentator on Ruth, Edward Topsell, and by a contemporary woman – the Countess of Lincoln.

The editorial framework draws on the work of commentators on Ruth preceding Bernard, in the ancient and medieval as well as the early modern periods. This reference to previous commentators is a significant part of the edition because it shows where Bernard's views are original. In the introduction biographical information about Bernard himself, in particular, and also the earlier commentators is provided. A tradition of commentaries on Ruth is thus depicted. It is argued that Bernard's significant contribution to this tradition is his application of his own theory of preaching, set out in his The Faithfull Shepheard (first edition 1607), to Ruths Recompence.

The present edition interprets various other aspects of the commentary, in particular, those relating to Bernard's theological position as a puritan clergyman who was involved with separatism early in his career but later published attacks on separatists and conformed uneasily with the Church of England. In the commentary, he criticises Roman Catholicism, and expresses views on providence, predestination and the Anabaptists. These subjects are commented on in the editorial framework. Other subjects to which this edition draws the reader's attention include Bernard's repeated reference to hierarchy in society and his admiration of the simple, primitive legal system depicted in Ruth.

The introduction concludes with a glance at modern feminist scholars' writing on Ruth. The present edition aspires to make a contribution to feminist interpretations of the early modern period, and it can be recognised that many of the feminist features perceived in the biblical narrative by modern scholars are far from the concerns of Bernard, who was in most respects a typically patriarchal clergyman of his time.



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I would also like to thank Professor Lim for allowing me to attend classes on the Bible at New College. This informed my reading of Ruth and the commentaries. Thanks are also due to Fiona Carmichael, who helped with computer problems, with starting to use the Optical Character Recognition, and in providing a congenial working environment. Finally, I wish to thank my parents for their encouragement and for making this project possible.





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### **Note to the Reader**

The MLA guidelines on presentation of research papers have been followed in this thesis.

Regarding pagination, the page numbers of Ruths Recompence referred to in the Introduction and annotations are those of the original edition, indicated in the text of the commentary by square brackets. This methodology enables the reader to refer to an original edition or an EEBO copy with ease. The page numbers in square brackets in the commentary have been put in bold print so that they can swiftly be recognised.



## **Abbreviations**

<u>AV</u>	Authorized Version of the Bible
<u>BJE</u>	D.R.G. Beattie, <u>Jewish Exegesis of the Book of Ruth</u>
<u>BMC</u>	British Museum Catalogue
<u>BTR</u>	D.R.G. Beattie, trans., ‘The Targum of Ruth’
<u>CC</u>	Richard Bernard, <u>The Common Catechisme</u>
<u>DNB</u>	<u>Dictionary of National Biography</u>
<u>EEBO</u>	<u>Early English Books Online</u>
<u>FCR</u>	<u>A Feminist Companion to Ruth</u> . (1993)
<u>FS</u>	Richard Bernard, <u>The Faithfull Shepheard</u> (1607) (References are to this edition unless otherwise stated; in in-text citations, ‘ <u>FS</u> , 1621 ed.’ indicates the 1621 edition)
<u>Josephus [Loeb]</u>	Flavius Josephus, <u>Jewish Antiquities</u> . <u>Josephus</u> . Trans. H. St. John Thackeray and Ralph Marcus. Vol. 5. Loeb Classical Library. Book V section ix.
<u>Josephus [Whiston]</u>	Flavius Josephus, <u>Antiquities of the Jews</u> . The <u>Works of Flavius Josephus</u> . Trans. William Whiston
(General citations from Josephus are from the Whiston edition, whereas specific citations regarding Josephus’s narrative of the story of the Book of Ruth are from the Loeb edition.)	
<u>JGR</u>	Richard Bernard, <u>Josuahs Godly Resolution in conference with Caleb, touching houshold government for well ordering a familie With A twofold Catechisme for instruction of youth</u> .

<u>Lavater</u>	Ludwig Lavater, <u>The Booke of Ruth expounded in 28 Sermons</u> , trans. Ephraim Pagitt (1586)  Other works by Lavater are cited with a short title.
<u>MET</u>	Lesley Smith, trans., <u>Medieval Exegesis in Translation</u>
<u>NIV</u>	<u>The New International Version Study Bible</u>
<u>ODCC</u>	<u>The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church</u>
<u>ODNB</u>	<u>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</u>
<u>OEDO</u>	<u>Oxford English Dictionary Online</u>
<u>RR</u>	Richard Bernard, <u>Ruths Recompence</u>
<u>Ruth</u>	The Book of Ruth as found in printed Bibles
<u>SP</u>	Richard Bernard, <u>The Shepherds Practice</u> (1621) (References are to this edition since it was accessible.)
<u>Topsell</u>	Edward Topsell, <u>The Reward of Religion</u> (1596) (References to Topsell's commentary on <u>Ruth</u> are to this edition unless otherwise stated.)

## INTRODUCTION

### 1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The decision to make an edition of Richard Bernard's Ruths Recompence was taken following reading a number of commentaries on Ruth published between 1578 and 1702. This focus on commentaries on Ruth resulted from noting how difficult the commentators found it to expound the daring conduct of Ruth and Naomi in Ruth chapter 3, in particular, given the moral values of the commentators' own society. There were a number of reasons for choosing to make an edition of Bernard's commentary in particular. Firstly, it is mid way through the series of early modern commentaries on Ruth. It thus provides an opportunity to consider its development from its predecessors, and its influence on its successors. Secondly, an edition of Bernard's commentary was made in 1865 by Alexander Balloch Grosart. This prior edition indicates the merit of the commentary as a literary work, and invites further exploration of it to pursue further issues, notably that of women's conduct. Thirdly, the author, Bernard, is of interest as an example of a Puritan conforming uneasily to the discipline of the established church in the early seventeenth century and expressing his convictions through his many publications.

Bernard may well have chosen to continue a long established tradition of commenting on Ruth because the story depicts peaceful rural life unlike other parts of the Old Testament. The work was originally formulated as a series of sermons, and he could therefore apply to it the method of preaching which he himself had expounded in his The Faithfull Shepheard, first published in 1607. It is a distinctly



legalistic approach, in striking contrast to the more spiritual mode adopted by Bernard's contemporary, George Herbert, another exemplary country parson.<sup>1</sup> Bernard sought to derive clearly defined lessons from Ruth and, at least in the original sermons, apply them to his congregation. However, Ruth also posed a major problem for Bernard and, in particular, his early modern predecessors writing on this biblical book, Ludwig Lavater and Edward Topsell, which is the main concern of this edition. This problem was how to interpret Ruth's conduct in chapter 3, where she followed Naomi's advice by approaching Boaz alone at night and requested marriage.<sup>2</sup> Lavater's, Topsell's and Bernard's views on women's conduct would have been influenced by the hierarchical assumptions which structured their society, and according to which women were considered inferior to men. Their views would also have been shaped by the extensive literature on women's conduct, including conduct books and debates generating models of ideal women and of women who misbehaved. Ruth's conduct in chapter 3 appears contrary to what might be expected of a good woman.

The early modern preoccupation with women's conduct has attracted a good deal of attention by modern scholars. The present edition aims to contribute to this scholarship by analysing Bernard's elaboration of models of, principally, ideal female conduct in the first two chapters especially, as well as his evaluation of the

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<sup>1</sup> See Helen Wilcox, "'Heaven's Lidger Here': Herbert's Temple and Seventeenth-century Devotion.' 155.

<sup>2</sup> Understanding the significance of Ruth's encounter with Boaz by night at the threshing floor is enhanced by the research of Diana O'Hara presented in Courtship and constraint: Rethinking the making of marriage in Tudor England. O'Hara focuses on the circumstances of meetings in courtships (O'Hara 138). She discusses a variety of meeting places, including work in the case of servants (145-8). The relevance of her account to Ruth's encounter is evident in her recognition that taverns, fairs and markets in the early modern period all notoriously provided opportunities for clandestine meetings, besides social gatherings. These places transgressed the moral regulation of the community (O'Hara 144, 138-9, 150-1). The private assignation could have similar functions (148, 151). It would be natural to view Ruth's conduct in this context, setting a dangerous precedent for women in the society Bernard lived in.

problematic conduct of Naomi and Ruth in chapter 3. Attention will be drawn to the way Bernard, like his early modern predecessors, evidently finds that the women showed boldness in chapter 1 on account of their piety. This is consistent with Peter Lake's argument, which is mentioned below in the discussion about contemporary models of exemplary women, that certain women in the early modern period may have been enabled by their piety to show initiative and act boldly. It is also demonstrated that Bernard, like Lavater and Topsell, perceives a danger to Ruth's chastity resulting from her necessary assertiveness in seeking to earn a living by gleaning in chapter 2. The main emphasis in analysing the commentary in terms of women's conduct, however, consists of discussion and annotation of chapter 3. Here, attention is drawn to how Bernard's views develop those of his predecessors.

## **2. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION ABOUT RICHARD BERNARD (bap. 1568, d. 1641)**

Ruths Recompence: or a Commentarie upon the Booke of Ruth (1628) is a good example of the way the Bible was interpreted by devout Protestants in the early seventeenth century. While its author, Richard Bernard, was a clergyman in the Church of England, he had Puritan convictions that gave him an ambivalent attitude towards conformity with the canons of the Church (Greaves, ODNB). This is reflected in the many and varied works that he published, and in some of his actions. The Church of England was the only legitimate church in the country, and it was governed in accordance with the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion drawn up by

Convocation in 1562 (Brook, Introduction 1: 21). However, many clergymen and lay people in England from the time of Elizabeth I objected to the elements of Roman Catholicism which were retained in the Church despite its Reformation. They sought further reformation to bring the Church of England closer to other Reformed Churches (Coffey and Lim, Introduction 3), specifically the continental Calvinist churches (Coffey and Lim, Introduction 2). These people were labelled 'Puritans' by their opponents, and they will be described as such here since the term is well known. They themselves used the term 'godly' (Webster, Godly Clergy 4). They particularly objected to the prayer book, which was condemned as popish in An Admonition to the Parliament (1572) (Craig 39). Resentment was widespread when in October 1583 all clergy were required to subscribe to three articles, of which the most controversial was that the Book of Common Prayer did not conflict with the work of God and was to be used rather than any other (Craig 41). There was similar opposition when James VI and I imposed subscription to these articles at the beginning of his reign (Webster, 'Puritanism' 49). Most Puritans stayed in the Church of England, endeavouring to reform it from within (Coffey and Lim, Introduction 4-5). Establishing separate churches was regarded as schismatic by the Church of England, a step not to be taken lightly. However, as early as 1566, some Puritans did withdraw from this Church and set up separate assemblies (Brook, Introduction 1: 28). In James's reign also, a minority of Puritans left the Church of England. The departing Puritans set up separatist and Baptist congregations (Coffey and Lim, Introduction 5). It will be seen that Bernard resented the impositions of his Church enough to become involved with the separatist movement, but was persuaded

back into the official Church. In time, Puritanism spread even beyond England. In particular, there were Puritan colonies in New England, including Massachusetts.

Puritanism was characterised by a number of perceptions and beliefs. In particular, Puritans saw themselves as a persecuted minority who were surrounded by ungodly people, as Alexandra Walsham notes (Walsham 277). This is illustrated by Ruths Recompence (particularly in chapter 4, eg. p. 361, where Bernard comments on how little brotherly love there is among men). The Puritans' perception of some people being godly in contrast with other people who were ungodly relates to their concern with the issue of predestination. This concern is particularly indicated by their involvement in intra-Reformed controversies on the subject (Coffey and Lim, Introduction 3). Bernard touches on predestination in the commentary, and the subject will be discussed in the next section of this Introduction. It will be shown there that Bernard appears to change his position on predestination in the course of his career. It will also be pointed out in the next section that Bernard exemplifies the clergy's emphasis on providence, and that, for Puritans, providence pertaining to the individual was amongst the signs to be interpreted as indicating whether they were to be saved.

Bernard's ministry began only a few years before the accession of James VI and I. Suspensions and deprivations of ministers are recorded in James's reign (notably including Bernard), and canons issued in 1604 imposed a sentence of excommunication on nonconforming ministers. James's Book of Sports (1618), authorising the traditional Sunday sports, which was to be read by ministers to their congregations, was a notorious stumbling block (Brook, Introduction, 1: 68-9). It led to the punishment of ministers, for many of them resisted it. However, the Jacobean

Church of England was by no means as prone to persecution as the Church under Laud in the succeeding reign (Doerksen pars. 13-15). A piety centred on the Word - that is, on the Scripture and the preaching that interpreted it - was an accepted part of Jacobean churchmanship, and this was congenial to ministers like Bernard. If their convictions led them into some measure of nonconformity, they could sometimes enjoy the protection of sympathetic bishops. The relative flexibility of the Jacobean Church allowed such ministers to foster a culture which distanced itself from that of less godly churchmen and laity.<sup>3</sup>

Bernard's career also extends throughout the oppressive Laudian period when scruples such as his were less tolerated, but his writings reflect the issues central to the godly and indicate his significant role in the Puritan movement.

Bernard was baptized on 30 April 1568 at Epworth, Lincolnshire. He was financed in his studies at Christ's College Cambridge by Isabel and Frances Wray (Greaves, ODNB). They were daughters of Sir Christopher Wray (c. 1522-1592), a judge and Speaker of the House of Commons who was one of the commissioners for the trial of Mary, queen of Scots in October 1586 (N. Jones, ODNB). Although their father was hostile to Puritans, Isabel and Frances, as well as their brother, William, were sympathetic towards them. Bernard came into contact with the Puritan practice of exorcism through Isabel. In 1586 she was hosting efforts by godly ministers to perform an exorcism. She later brought the exorcist who was held to have achieved the cure of this case, John Darrell, into a circle of Puritans at Ashby-de-la-Zouch led

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<sup>3</sup> This interpretation is corroborated by Tom Webster in his Godly Clergy. Webster sees Puritan clergy in early Stuart England, neither wholly within nor fully opposed to the Church, as showing sociability between themselves and forming 'a community distinct from their less faithful rivals' (Godly Clergy prefatory note preceding the title page. See also Webster, Godly Clergy 334). This sociability exceeded the call of professional identity and kinship ties (Webster, Godly Clergy 1). Webster focuses on the voluntary religious practices of clerical communities, such as fasting and prayer which he describes as 'rituals of sociability' (Godly Clergy 73).

by Arthur Hildersham and including Bernard (Freeman, ODNB). This contact may have encouraged Bernard to develop an interest in exorcism, for, in his first ministerial post he claimed that he had exorcised a demon from John Fox of Nottingham (G., A. B., DNB). Furthermore, his publications include one on witches, who, he maintained, made a league with the devil (Grand-Jury Men 254).

Christ's College, Cambridge, to which the Wray sisters sent Bernard, was an institution at which Puritan ideas were prevalent. William Perkins, an influential moderate Puritan was a Fellow of Christ's College who tutored William Ames, later also an influential religious author. Bernard may have come into contact with both men. He might have been a student of Perkins or have encountered him through Perkins's lectureship at the neighbouring church, St. Andrew the Great. As for Ames, his attendance at the College coincides with Bernard's. Ames may have been the tutor of William Chappell, who later tutored John Milton at the College (Lares 80). To this constellation of Puritan thinkers, then, Bernard became affiliated by his matriculation at the College in 1592. He graduated BA in 1595 and MA in 1598. Also in 1598 his first book was published, a translation of the Latin dramatist Terence (Greaves, ODNB).

Bernard was married by 1601, the year of his first church appointment. This marriage produced six children. The church to which Bernard was appointed was Worksop, Nottinghamshire. When at Worksop, Bernard came into conflict with the church authorities. He objected to the surplice, refusing to conform to the canons of 1604, and was deprived on 9 April 1605 (Greaves, ODNB). At this time, Bernard was sufficiently in sympathy with separatists of his acquaintance to join them. He was present at a conference at the house of Lady Bowes (the remarried Isabel Wray)

at which a number of leading Puritans were present. At this conference John Smyth and Thomas Helwys advocated separation from the Church of England, but this course was opposed by Arthur Hildersham and the majority of those present (Freeman, [ODNB](#); Greaves, [ODNB](#)). Bernard aligned himself with the separatist position to the extent that he made a covenant with a number of people from Worksop and nearby, which included the resolve to celebrate communion as ‘the Lord’s supper’. However, he subsequently withdrew from his nonconformity. Tobie Matthew, the Archbishop of York, persuaded him to return to his official ministry in Worksop in 1607 (Greaves, [ODNB](#)).

Bernard spent the rest of his career in the Church of England, emphasising his changed position by publishing attacks on separatists. This involved him in rather bitter controversy with a number of his former associates. His stance is represented by a book he published in 1610 in response to refutations of his earlier book, Separatists Schisme (1608), by John Smyth and Henry Ainsworth. This publication was entitled Plaine Evidences: The Church of England is Apostolicall, the separation Schismaticall. Answering Ainsworth, Bernard alludes to his own former association with the separatists: ‘Hee calls that light, which I knew of their way, but I now judge it darknesse, through knowledge of the truth now, whereof I was ignorant then. I see now by the light, their darknesse, our truth, their errours, and yet bewaile personall corruptions.’ (2). Plaine Evidences exploits the fragmentation of Bernard’s opposition, drawing on Smyth’s book, The differences of the Churches of the Separation (1608). While Bernard was a formidable opponent of the separatists, he remained uneasy with the ceremonies of the Church of England. In 1608 and 1611

he incurred the censure of the authorities because he would not use the sign of the cross in baptism (Greaves, ODNB).

Whilst he was minister of Worksop, Bernard also produced the first editions of works which, at this time and in later editions, had an extensive influence on the practice of the ministry in the Church of England. The Faithfull Shepheard (1607) is chiefly a manual of preaching, in the tradition of the continental homiletic writer Andreas Gerardus Hyperius (1511-64) (Lares 68). A second edition of The Faithfull Shepheard with a similar content appeared in 1609, and a third edition, ‘Wholy in a manner transposed, and made anew, and very much enlarged’ was published in 1621. This edition vividly illustrates Bernard’s conviction that the interpretation of scripture presents a daunting intellectual challenge. ‘Who knowes not that the study of holy Scriptures requireth the use of all manner of learning, and the skill of all sciences exactly to expound, and judiciously to unfold the meaning of every place of the Bible?’ (Bernard, FS, 1621 ed. 40) The Ruth commentary demonstrates how seriously Bernard aspired to meet this obligation. The 1609 and 1621 editions were published together with an example of a sermon, The Shepheards Practice,<sup>4</sup> in which marginal notes indicate the components of the sermon and the text also refers to the stages of the sermon’s development, according to Bernard’s theory of preaching.

An interesting episode is recorded in which Bernard was denounced in a church court in October 1634 by a prominent citizen of Batcombe, James Ashe. It illustrates the way Bernard put his theory of preaching into practice. Ashe denounced Bernard for his manner of preaching; that is, for censuring one identifiable parishioner. This presumably happened when he came to the application

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<sup>4</sup> The 1609 edition has “Practise” rather than “Practice” in the title.



of the use of the doctrine he was expounding to the needs of his congregation. A witness for Ashe testified that on the Sunday following a confrontation between Bernard and him, Bernard preached against the conduct of ‘some’, and subsequently confessed that he meant Ashe. Bernard replied by denouncing Ashe for not attending the parish church on holidays. He also denounced James Milford, one of Ashe’s witnesses, for not kneeling on entering church. Bernard denied particularising; Ashe made an excuse for not attending holiday services and was given a warning. No action seems to have been taken regarding Bernard (Stieg 202-3<sup>5</sup>). However, three weeks later he was presented again for his preaching. The presentation related to his addressing apostasy in a sermon of 12 October 1634 at Batcombe. Here he actually justified reproving particular persons, according to the example of Nathan to David. The outcome was again inconclusive (Stieg 203<sup>6</sup>). It is clear that Bernard’s style of preaching was not entirely welcome to his parishioners. In annoying a prominent parishioner, Bernard was showing himself willing to follow his own advice of dealing most roundly with the greatest persons in any application (FS 75-6).

In The Faithfull Shepheard, Bernard also emphasises the importance of catechizing and advises how to perform it. Catechizing is a necessary preparation for hearing sermons according to Bernard (FS 8-10). In preparing his sermons on Ruth he would have assumed that his hearers knew the elements of the official doctrine of the Church of England. His discussion of catechizing is expanded in the 1621 edition (100-105). This emphasis on catechizing in The Faithfull Shepheard, and especially the 1621 edition, reflects Bernard’s practice of this activity, by which he

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<sup>5</sup> Citing S.R.O. D/D/Ca 299. Batcombe. 11 October 1634.

<sup>6</sup> Citing S.R.O. D/D/Ca 299. 31 October 1634.

endeavoured to make his parishioners more godly. He also produced other catechetical publications, and his catechisms belong to what Ian Green describes as the second phase of catechism writing in England, which extended from the 1570s to the early 1640s, and was distinguished by diversity of forms but relatively homogenous doctrine (Green 58). Bernard's A Large Catechisme following the Order of the Common Authorized Catechisme (1602) was published close to the beginning of his ministry at Worksop, before he was deprived. In 1607 he published A Double Catechisme, which included a version of his previous catechism and a shorter catechism. Bernard's subsequent catechetical works belong to the later part of his ministry after he had left Worksop, but will be mentioned here to show the development of this aspect of his guidance for the clergy. Josuahs Resolution for the Well Ordering of his Household (1612) had amongst its contents a version of the Double Catechisme. In 1613 Bernard published a sermon on catechizing appearing as the first part of a work entitled Two Twinnes. In 1630, his most popular expansion of the prayer book catechism, The Common Catechisme appeared, of which eleven editions had been published by 1640. This was accompanied by the work, Good Christian, Looke to thy Creede (1630).

For Bernard, the catechism was 'the ABC of our religion' (Bernard, Two Twinnes 12). He aimed to supplement the Prayer Book catechism rather than reject it. Indeed in his Common Catechisme he supplies arguments why the Prayer Book catechism should be taught before any other (sig. A4r). Although the Prayer Book catechism was primarily directed at every child before confirmation, he, typically of catechetical writers of his time, had in mind 'All ignorant of the grounds of Christian faith, though married and well stricken in yeeres, yea, the very eldest for age.'

(Common Catechisme sig. A4v) The whole congregation should be prepared for the practice of religion. In this catechism, Bernard employs a technique of subdividing questions ‘to draw answers from the words as they lie in order’. He draws attention to his own application of this technique to biblical interpretation (Common Catechisme sig. A2r). He may well have had his commentary on Ruth, published two years earlier, in mind.

Bernard was issued with a licence to preach throughout the diocese of Bath and Wells from the summer of 1612 by Bishop James Montague. Montague had been a student at Christ’s College, Cambridge a few years before Bernard, and knew him at the College (McCullough, ODNB; Greaves, ODNB). Montague also approved the process by which Bernard gained his next living, Batcombe, Somerset. This living was presented to Bernard in November 1613 by Philip Bisse, archdeacon of Taunton and former minister of Batcombe (Greaves, ODNB; Brook, 2.460). Bernard remained minister of Batcombe for the rest of his career, preaching as well in eastern Somerset. He was initially untroubled in this post by the church authorities, perhaps because of the protection of Montague. After Montague moved to the see of Winchester in 1616, Bernard established a rapport with his successor, Arthur Lake, dedicating his commentary on Revelation, A Key of Knowledge, partly to him in 1617 (Greaves, ODNB). This strategy paid off immediately, for Bernard at this time was charged with not wearing his graduate hood in violation of canon 58, but the charges were dropped in the Wells consistory court: he claimed that Lake had permitted this to happen (Greaves, ODNB).

In 1627, Bernard’s A Guide to Grand-Jury Men on the subject of witches appeared. In this book he cites places in the Bible condemning witches, both good

and bad, and argues that all witches ought to die. However, he also devotes considerable discussion to dissuading his readers from too readily ascribing afflictions to witchcraft, when there may be another explanation, such as natural diseases. Bernard finds most witches to be women and suggests reasons for this which reveal his prejudice against women: this should be taken into account when reading his assessments of Naomi and Ruth in Ruths Recompence. In particular, he claims that women are more malicious when displeased than men, and they are more prone to curse, more revengeful. They are therefore better suited to being instruments of the devil (92-3). Bernard published his most popular book, The Isle of Man later in 1627. This work is an allegory in which sin is discovered, put on trial and condemned. Bernard shows his hostility to Roman Catholicism by including ‘*Papistry*’ amongst those tried.<sup>7</sup> The book is compulsive reading and may have inspired John Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress (Grosart, ‘Richard Bernard’ 321). The importance to Bernard of his work on witches is evident from the fact that he refers to it at length in the Epistle to the Reader in The Isle of Man.

His commentary on Ruth, Ruths Recompence appeared in 1628, when he was at the height of his writing career. However, this was also a time when Puritanism was coming under increasing attack from the church authorities as Laud moved up the ecclesiastical ladder. The impact of this situation on Bernard is detectable in the commentary.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The trial of ‘*Papistry*’ is depicted at length by Bernard in Isle (228-62).

<sup>8</sup> See Bernard’s exposition of Naomi’s being bereft of her sons and husband in Ruth 1.5, pp. 31-2. Having earlier drawn attention to God’s punishments, Bernard here declares God’s purposes respecting the afflictions of the godly. This would have been particularly relevant to the suffering Puritan clergymen of Bernard’s time, and the instructive use which follows might have been written with them in mind. In this use, he enjoins contentment and patience and asserts that it is a fault to murmur at God. Such composure in affliction may have been expected of clergy in particular; regarding the afflicted in general, Topsell in his commentary on Ruth allows that ‘wee may feare and

Bernard's Puritanism was evident a few years later when in October 1634 he was brought before the bishop of Bath and Wells, William Piers, for nonconformity. Piers ordered him to genuflect on entering church, to take off his hat during prayers, to stop repeating sermons after the Sunday service, to restrict himself to using only the prayer book catechism (contrary to his objectives in publishing catechisms expanding the prayer book catechism), and not to catechize in the course of prayers (Greaves, ODNB). Despite this conflict with authority, Bernard went on to publish another book, The Ready Way to Good Works (1635), expounding charity, a theme emerging in Ruths Recompence, particularly in connection with Boaz's generosity to Ruth in chapter 2. Bernard's Puritan activism is evident from the fact that he and the minister John White of Dorchester collected money to relieve silenced ministers in the 1630s. Furthermore, in this decade he wrote a book enjoining sabbath observance, A Threefold Treatise of the Sabbath. This constituted a rejection of James I's Book of Sports, republished in 1633. Bernard's Treatise could not be published until Laudian censorship ended, appearing only in 1641. Bernard also, about 1635-6, wrote to church leaders in the Massachusetts Bay Colony about their practices (Greaves, ODNB). In doing so, he was one of a number of English Puritans who sent enquiries since they thought that Massachusetts might be moving towards separatism (Bremer 137). The colonists answered and this response was published in the 1640s after the collapse of censorship in England (Bremer 137). Bernard's nonconformity was again evident when he was involved in circulating a petition against the etcetera oath passed by Convocation in 1640, which required swearing not to consent to any alteration in church government (Greaves, ODNB).

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cry under the burthen of our paines, that our afflictions are bitter unto us; and that the hand of the Lord is grievous uppon us' (p. 82).

With the ending of ecclesiastical censorship in the 1640s, it became possible to air a wide range of ideas about church government. Bernard may have joined in this debate, that is, if he was indeed the author of A Short View of the Praelaticall Church of England (1641). Some, including Bernard's nineteenth-century editor, Grosart dispute this attribution (Grosart, 'Richard Bernard' 323, footnote) but there is nothing improbable in it. The author complains of abuses in the discipline and government of the Church. The book ends with a scheme of Church government which consists of a range of levels from the presbytery of ministers at the most local level, through bishops at the county level who have pastoral charges, to provincial synods which can monitor the bishops. Over all of them is a national assembly to make canons and establish ecclesiastical government. This scheme was meant to remove 'all Prelaticall Lordly tyranny' (Short View 38) and bring the Church of England into conformity of doctrine and discipline with Protestant churches in Scotland and elsewhere.

Bernard was a prolific and versatile author. Apart from the publications mentioned already, he expounded the principles of military strategy to be found in the Bible (Bible-Battells, 1629), wrote the pastoral guide Christian See to Thy Conscience (1631), engaged in controversy with Catholic apologists (Looke beyond Luther, 1623) and embarked on an exposition of the Psalms (Dauids Musick, 1616). A work published posthumously, Thesaurus biblicus, seu, Promptuarium sacrum (1644), is a concordance, a product of the biblical knowledge so evident in Ruths Recompence.

Bernard died on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1641.

### 3. VARIOUS ISSUES ADDRESSED BY BERNARD IN RUTHS RECOMPENCE

Ruths Recompence takes account of a wide range of issues that were important to clergy in the early seventeenth century, and since they form the context of Bernard's concern to demonstrate how Ruth is an example to be followed by the women in his congregation, they deserve some attention. He lived in a society where a hierarchy of class and occupation was taken for granted. 'Now also hence we may inferre,' Bernard writes, 'that if one may be set over another in a familie, then also in a Common-wealth; for without order of superiority and inferiority, no Common-wealth can stand <1 Chron. 27>' (RR 149).<sup>9</sup> The ways in which Bernard maintained that the social hierarchy should function may be observed particularly clearly in what he has to say about the godly family, notably in his earlier work, Josuahs Godly Resolution in conference with Caleb, touching houshold governement for well ordering a familie (1612). This book conveys a vision of the household as a hierarchy in which duties are performed mutually by individuals at different levels to benefit each other (JGR 30-1, 34-5).<sup>10</sup> The chief of these mutual duties is that the husband and wife are to love each other. The husband's love, according to Bernard, encourages the obedience of the wife as the less senior in the family hierarchy. Conversely, her obedience moves him to be kind (JGR 30-1).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> However, Bernard also on occasion challenges contemporary social hierarchy. See Ruths Recompence 121-2 (in Bernard's exposition of Naomi's lament in Ruth 1.21 that the Lord had testified against her).

<sup>10</sup> Another book, published in the interim between Josuahs Godly Resolution and Ruths Recompence, which illuminates Bernard's discussion of the godly family is William Gouge, Of Domesticall Duties (1622). Gouge similarly emphasises mutual submission between members of the family (6-7).

<sup>11</sup> However, in Ruths Recompence, Bernard indicates that women and children should disobey the male head of the household if he directs them to do evil (13, 81). Gouge likewise includes in Of

As for servants, in Josuahs Godly Resolution, Bernard emphasises the responsibility of the chief of the house to teach the children and household the ways of God (21). Amongst the reasons why servants should be religious is that they would serve honestly since their reward would come from God (JGR 34). This interpretation that servants' fulfilment through religion improves their reliability is evidently the basis of Bernard's treatment of servants and masters in Ruths Recompence. In Ruths Recompence, Bernard points out the duty of masters to show consideration for their servants. They should not assume that servants do too little; they should not be distrustful without reason. Furthermore, they should not make their servants work so hard that they have no time for God. Servants have souls to save. Masters should take time for religion, which will result in God's blessing on the work they undertake (RR 144-5). Although Bernard presents this considerate kind of conduct as a simple concern for the spiritual welfare of servants, it is clear from Josuahs Godly Resolution that religious servants will serve their masters better. In Ruths Recompence, Bernard integrates a less definitely worded version of his earlier argument into a broader discussion of servant reliability.

The management of servants so as to minimise the dangers of delegation to a bailiff or steward arises in connection with Boaz's having appointed a servant over the reapers, as mentioned in Ruth 2.5. Bernard notes the wisdom of an overseer being appointed in great families in the absence of the master, and supports his argument with examples taken from the Bible. He specifies how an overseer servant should practise supervision, and states how he should inform his master of his affairs. In particular, he should notify the master of which servants are diligent, so that they

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Domesticall Duties a section on '*Of limiting all dutie to man, within the compasse of the feare of God*' (13-16).



may be rewarded, and those who are not fit for his service, and may be dismissed after having been duly paid. (148-9). These views are characteristic of opinions on these chief officers in the early modern period, as related by Mark Thornton Burnett in his Masters and Servants in English Renaissance Drama and Culture: Authority and Obedience (1997). Burnett points out that stewards who are dishonest and ambitious commonly appear in literature of the medieval period and subsequently (Burnett 155). Chief officers are also represented as drunken and lascivious (161). In particular, it was feared that the steward might abuse his financial responsibilities (164). On the other hand, Burnett observes, the steward was charged to protect the morality of the household by cultivating a virtuous working environment (156-7).

In conclusion, Bernard is concerned to demonstrate that a genuinely religious master will acquire the authority appropriate to his place in the hierarchy. This can be seen in his exposition of Boaz's charge to his young men not to touch Ruth (Ruth 2.9). He observes that Boaz's servants must have been in awe of him, or this command alone would not have made Ruth safe (RR 165). In every respect Boaz is a model of what a master should be.

Beyond the well-conducted household there were the poor, a perennial concern for early modern moralists.<sup>12</sup> Bernard's observations on this topic are representative of the thinking of his contemporaries. This is particularly evident when he addresses the objection raised in his exposition of chapter 2 verse 16, that Boaz could just have given Ruth corn rather than have her glean it. Bernard advocates keeping the poor labouring when relieving them (208). This is a major element in his scheme of

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<sup>12</sup> See Paul A. Fideler, Social Welfare in Pre-Industrial England. In Bernard's time the poor were seen as 'socially deviant, disorderly, and dangerous', and 'setting the poor to work' was an essential component of social policy (Fideler 197-8).

charity. Also in this passage, he condemns the vagrant poor (208), and the threat he perceives to be posed to the social order by this group may well be what largely motivates his concern with charity. Steady employment would prevent them moving from place to place and evading punishment for their crimes. All in all, in his exposition of chapter 2, Bernard draws lessons from Boaz as an exemplary man of wealth, generous but discriminating in his conduct towards the impoverished Ruth.<sup>13</sup>

He is also a model citizen. In chapter 4 of Ruths Recompence Bernard commends the biblical simpler system of justice, which prevented the abuses so often satirised in early modern texts, which come with the complexities of a legal establishment. The legal transaction by which Boaz came to be married to Ruth is presented as exemplary. Bernard's discussion of the legal arrangements evidently sometimes derives from his immediate predecessors Lavater and Topsell, and the subject is even dealt with to some degree in commentaries preceding the early modern period (for example, the openness of proceedings transacted at a city's gates is addressed by medieval Christian commentators on the Book of Ruth, see MET 44, 63). However, Bernard finds additional reasons for approving the biblical practice, and his discussion is more extensive. The specific instances where he follows his predecessors are noted in the annotations.

Bernard's dissatisfaction with individuals involved in the legal process in his own time is evident in chapter 3, where he draws attention to those judges, lawyers, sherriffs, and false witnesses or bribers whose are fraudulent in ways he depicts (305). When he comes to expound the initial verses of chapter 4, he evidently finds in the biblical arrangements for justice remedies for the evils he perceives in his own

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<sup>13</sup> Bernard's principles of poor relief are illustrated in footnotes to chapter 2.

society. He is particularly struck, in the first instance, by the nature of the place where cases are dealt with. In expounding Ruth 4.1, Bernard explains that the gate was the place of judgement. His discussion of this is evidently largely based on Topsell's discussion about city gates (Topsell 205-7). Bernard suggests reasons why the place of judgement was there, notably that justice was better manifested where all could see and hear. He concludes that public causes should be decided in public places, which would prevent the abuses all too possible in private hearings, with sinful dealings going unpunished (RR 337-9).

Bernard takes the opportunity provided by the biblical narrative in Ruth 4.1, relating that Boaz called on the kinsman to turn aside and sit down at the gate, to emphasise the public character of this location. He is further concerned to underline the lawfulness of going to law publicly if there is a just cause. God himself, he maintains, appointed public courts of justice for his people, and gave laws to judge by. Bernard, as he states, is here engaging with the Anabaptists, who do not accept the need for magistrates and this judicial process for ending controversies. But Bernard's concerns about misuse of the legal system are apparent even in this defence of it. He makes it plain that men must not sue each other unnecessarily or maliciously. They must choose honest lawyers and must not bribe or use circumventions (RR 343-4).

In later passages, Bernard derives from the primitive biblical society further ways in which the legal system in his own society should be improved. According to Bernard's exposition of Boaz's taking ten men in Ruth 4.2, who, he points out had authority, judges should be fit persons to exercise their authority (347). The elders Boaz took exemplify this fitness according to Bernard's subsequent explanation of

the role of elders and their selection and characteristics (347-51). In particular, elders were ‘of the best, able and fittest men’ (RR 348). One requirement he stipulates for magistrates and men in authority in his discussion of elders is characteristic of his vision for a fair legal system: ‘[T]hey must deale equally without respect of person, hearing the small, as well as the great, not wresting judgement, but judge the people with just judgement’ (350). He concludes this discussion by deriving a lesson from the connotation of old age in the Hebrew word for elders, and the fact that the name of the Greek Assembly of elders shows that it consisted of old men. This lesson is that judges and magistrates should be elderly (RR 350). The reasons he gives for this are essentially the same as those Lavater gives to explain why the Greeks chose mostly elders for the senate (RR 350-1; Lavater 114r-114v). Bernard’s previous listing of other qualities in elders provides a wider basis for the selection of judges and magistrates in his own society.

Bernard makes a fairly lengthy exposition of the biblical provision of justice for each city (351-2). This exposition is more detailed than Topsell’s mention of matters dealt with at city gates in scripture (Topsell 205-6). Bernard is also preceded by Salmon ben Yeroham in drawing attention to matters requiring judgement. Salmon, expounding Boaz’s calling of the elders and people to witness his taking of Ruth, explains the categories of property transactions. He finds parallels between these and the proving of the innocence or guilt of a woman suspected of adultery, and of a woman claimed not to be a virgin at marriage, where he quotes from Deut. 22 (BJE 83-4). Bernard concludes from his own account:

*[I]n well governed Common-wealths (like that of Israel, ordred by the wisdom of God himselfe) there shou[l]d be many Courts of justice, and so many, and so neere the townes and villages, that the people might*

*have speedy recourse thither to end any cause, which might fall out among them.* [353]

He points out advantages of this arrangement, which existed in Israel and Judah. It would mean that people would not be put to the expense of travelling. Also, people would no longer have to be kept in prison until cases were dealt with at quarter sessions and assizes. These advantages might be expected in a system of government devised by God, and this system should therefore be imitated by all nations (353-4). Thus, Bernard derives from the Bible a divinely ordained model of justice which, if adopted in England, would reform many abuses. In his account of the biblical provision of justice for each city, Bernard draws attention to the possibility of appeal to Jerusalem (351, 352). From this he concludes that: *'it is meet, that such a Court of justice bee in every well ordered state, whose sentence should be definitive, and with which men should rest'* (354). According to Bernard, this would curb those 'unquiet spirits' who pay to bring cases from one court to another and so wear down or undo the other party, 'a grievous sin, and that which cryeth aloud in the eares of the Lord, though Lawyers fill their purses by such devilish devices' (355). Bernard believes that the proposed court of appeal would at least contribute to remedying the evil he perceives of fraudulent lawyers.

One further aspect of the legal case in Ruth which Bernard finds exemplary is Boaz's own presentation of his business, beginning in Ruth 4.3. This was 'a happy libertie in that Common-wealth' (358). Bernard draws attention to the harmful consequences when men are not allowed to represent themselves but are rather forced to hire others to represent them: 'it commeth to passe, that causes are spunne out to an exceeding length, and not often faithfully handled: for men hired to set their wits and tongues on sale, what will they not doe?' (358) In this praise of Boaz's

representing himself and censure of the abuses to which legal representation is liable, Bernard follows Lavater and Topsell (Lavater 117v; Topsell 212-213).

Since Bernard attaches such importance to preserving hierarchy in society, it is not surprising that he is anxious to confute the errors of the Anabaptists, whom, as will be seen, he associated with anarchy (RR 149). ‘Anabaptists’ is a term used by the ‘magisterial’ (mainstream) Reformer, Zwingli, to describe individuals who denied the validity of infant baptism and undertook adult baptism, which was usually rebaptism (Cameron 319, 321), ‘ana’ being the Greek for ‘again’. Zwingli was confronting the adult baptisms, beginning on 21 January 1525, of those enthusiasts at Zurich who became known as the ‘Swiss Brethren’ (Cameron 321). The term came to be applied to all those sectaries who engaged in believers’, or adult baptism. These constituted most of the ‘radical’ sectarian movements in the Reformation period. Euan Cameron points out how shocking rebaptism was for most of society in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, because it implied contempt of the first, or catholic baptism. The Anabaptists made plain their belief that baptism of infants who could not understand what it signified was valueless (Cameron 334-5).

Cameron points out that the sectaries disagreed so much with each other that particular beliefs cannot be attributed to all of them (319). However, at Schleithem a group adopted a creed known as the Schleithem Confession in February 1527. This set out the principles of the movement, notably not participating in oath taking, public office or bloodshed. In general, Anabaptists did not hold the fundamental Protestant belief that even saved man is a sinner, and that only God knows who are saved (Cameron 319). Although they nevertheless probably did not universally regard themselves as sinless, the Anabaptists acted in such a way as to represent

themselves as a spiritual elite (Cameron 334, 335). In particular, believers were separated from unbelievers. This explains why Anabaptists excluded themselves from participation in the secular state. Separation from the world required Anabaptists to exercise discipline by excluding members who did not meet their standards (Cameron 336). By contrast, pastoral discipline was largely lacking in the magisterial Reformers churches (Lim 232). This may have made the Anabaptists particularly threatening to their critics, although critics on the whole preferred to invoke the example of the extreme form of Anabaptism that briefly controlled the city of Munster in 1534-5 (Cameron 325-6). Bernard himself would have had these extremists in mind when he alludes to ‘Anabaptisticall Anarchie’ (RR 149).

In the biographical information about Bernard above, mention has been made of his early association with radical separatists and later withdrawal from them and controversy with them. One of the separatist leaders with whom Bernard allied himself but later attacked was John Smyth. Bernard’s reaction to Smyth’s Anabaptism can be seen in Plaine Evidences: the Church of England is Apostolicall, the seperation Schismaticall (1610). In this book Bernard makes clear the distinctiveness of Smyth’s theological position - explained in terms of the stages by which he has reached it:

Mr. *Smith* will hold ever this word (*Se*) to himselfe, for in going into Brownisme, hee was a separatist, he held differing opinions from them, and now that he is in Anabaptisme, hee is a Se-baptist, he wholly goeth not with that Hereticall Sect. (Bernard, Plaine Evidences 19-20)

Proneness to division and subdivision was characteristic of the sects which rejected the authority of the established churches, but in some respects there was a shared culture. One element of this was belief in the frequent manifestation of divine providence. On a number of occasions in Ruths Recompence Bernard interprets the

story as demonstrating God's providence. He expounds the concept of providence in connection with Ruth's meeting Boaz for the first time in going out gleaning in chapter 2. God governs men's actions so that the outcome is as it should be. 'And this God doth, as foreknowing, and determining every thing, and ruling the same by the hand of his providence, as himselfe hath determined to bring things to passe.' (RR 141). According to Bernard people should rely on God's providence and acknowledge it in every thing. The godly should be thankful for works of mercy, and learn patience under trials (RR 141). However, God also shows his wrath to the wicked in works of judgement (RR 143). Regarding the trials of the godly, Bernard's comment here is amplified in his exposition of Naomi's being left with her two sons in Ruth 1.3. In this passage, he introduces the concept that God gives the godly some comforts even when he is afflicting them. This is so that the godly are not overwhelmed with their grief, but are sustained in their affliction. Godly men should not therefore be too downcast if affliction arrives, since God will not make them suffer more than they can stand. Bernard encourages a balanced reaction to affliction, taking into account what comfort there is (RR 24-5). It appears that in this passage, Bernard is attempting to distinguish chastisement of the godly from punishment of the wicked.

These interpretations of providence by Bernard are consistent with the findings of Alexandra Walsham in her study, Providence in Early Modern England (1999). According to Walsham, it was believed that God was 'an assiduous, energetic deity who constantly intervened in human affairs' (Providence 2). He gave both blessings and judgements. Walsham attributes providentialism to those 'of all social levels and



from all positions on the confessional spectrum' (Providence 2).<sup>14</sup> Walsham observes that in the view of most divines, God generally acted through inferior instruments, although he was not tied to them for the operation of his providence (Providence 12). According to Calvin's theology, the turpitude of God's instruments neither diminished his integrity nor reduced human culpability (Walsham Providence 14). Bernard puts forward this interpretation in his exposition of Elimelech and his family coming into Moab in Ruth 1.2. Although Elimelech might have been wrong to depart from Israel and go to Moab, God assisted his journey because it was to lead to the conversion of Ruth.

For the Lord can worke good out of evill, and can use ill instruments to good purposes: And therefore simply for the good issue, which God maketh, we are not to approve of either the matter in hand, or the mindes of men, which God useth therein, as is apparent in the former examples: for Gods will and worke was one thing, but theirs another: hee is to be praised, but they are to be reproved. (RR 17-18)

Walsham focuses on one work especially in her book, devoting a chapter to it and other literature treating similar themes. It is Thomas Beard's The Theatre of Gods Judgements (first published in 1597). This work is cited by Bernard in a marginal note, in connection with his exposition of Ruth's oath in Ruth 1.17. The note relates to Bernard's warning that there have been examples of men actually receiving the judgements they have invoked in their oaths (RR 100). Furthermore, Bernard evidently draws on Beard's book elsewhere in the commentary, notably in the passage preceding this one where the book is cited, where Bernard mentions Rodolphus, Duke of Suevia as rebelling against his oath to his emperor (100). This incident is narrated in Theatre (Beard 171). The title page of Theatre (1597) states

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<sup>14</sup> In her essay, 'The godly and popular culture', Walsham focuses on the connections between Puritan and lay providentialism. In the present account, Puritan providentialism is especially noted since the primary concern is with Bernard's theology.

that it was translated from the French, to which more than three hundred examples were added. The French text is Jean Chassanion's De grands et redoutables jugemens et punitions de Dieu (1581). Chassanion's text, in turn, drew on an earlier work of the pastor of Saxony, Andreas Hondorff, published in 1568. Hondorff's work was translated into Latin as Theatrum historicum (1575), and this version is cited by Beard in his margins (Walsham, Providence 70-1). The subject matter of Beard's version also is stated on the title page. It is 'A Collection of Histories out of Sacred, Ecclesiasticall, and prophane Authours, concerning the admirable Judgements of God upon the transgressours of his commandement[s]'. The book addresses God's providential punishment of sinners. There were subsequent editions before the publication of Bernard's commentary in 1628 – an edition of 1612 and an abridgement of 1618 by Edmund Rudierd, The thunderbolt of Gods wrath against hard-hearted and stiffe-necked sinners (Walsham, Providence 66). Bernard will have used one of these earlier editions.

Bernard also conforms to the practice of Protestant divines, noted by Walsham, of opposing popular beliefs which were contrary to providentialism (Walsham, Providence 20). In particular, Walsham draws attention to 'a general consensus that the greater part of the laity, learned as well as ignorant and poor, had yet to abandon a vestigial belief in chance, "haphazard", and luck' (Providence 20-1). Bernard addresses this issue in chapter 2 in expounding Ruth's asking permission to glean after one who will favour her, and with reference to her hap<sup>15</sup> (in landing on part of the field which belonged to Boaz). In the first of these instances, Bernard draws

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<sup>15</sup> 'hap': Bernard defines 'hap' himself, as is noted below. According to Bernard, 'when things fall out besides a mans purpose, or otherwise than was intended, and whereof a man is ignorant, before the thing come to passe, then it is counted hap, or lucke, or as the Heathen used to speake, fortune <Deut. 19.4>' (RR 140).

attention to Ruth's going at random, as it is said. Whilst there may here be an implicit criticism of Ruth's potential recklessness, Bernard makes clear that the outcome was the result of God's providence (RR 136-7). In the second instance, it is the outcome that is the subject of Bernard's exposition. Bernard states that God's providence is understood in Ruth's good hap. He goes on to observe that the words hap or luck are used by men when things happen otherwise than intended. He also notes that the heathen used the word, fortune. Bernard makes it clear that men may rightly say that things happen, chance, or are their luck, provided that they mean that these things result from the guidance of God's providence. They must not adhere to the heathen explanation of mere chance and fortune. He points out that the Philistine priests and diviners erred in this, and cites 1 Sam. 6.9, in which the Philistine priests and diviners allowed the possibility that the affliction of the Philistines was a chance, rather than the judgement of God (RR 140-1). It is implicit in Bernard's discussion that the Philistines were punished subsequently, according to 1 Sam. 7.10-14.

Walsham comments on the clerical hostility to the widespread belief in the goddess Fortuna, to whom many people attributed the causation of events in their lives. She was depicted in particular poses, for example, turning her wheel and giving out gifts (Providence 21). In the discussion above of the passage relating to Ruth's hap (RR 140-1), it has been observed that Bernard notes that the heathen used the word, fortune when things happen otherwise than intended. Later in the passage, as has been indicated, he warns against the heathen belief in mere chance and fortune without acknowledging God's intervention (RR 140). By 'heathen', Bernard evidently means the Romans, to whom belonged the goddess of chance and luck named Fortuna (see OEDO, 'fortune'). Bernard's position of opposing belief in

fortune which is not guided by God, and, implicitly, in a rival deity, is further evidence of his essential conformity with the stance of clergymen depicted by Walsham. Walsham goes on to point out that the medieval reconciliation of fortune and providence (by making fortune subservient to God), was not acceptable to ardent Calvinists, who would not admit of fortune (Providence 22). Possibly Bernard is not so extreme as these Calvinists, for his position appears closer to the medieval one in that he does at least allow it to be said that things happen, chance, or are luck.

The other aspect of Bernard's theological position to be considered here is where he stands regarding the issue of predestination. This issue was of great importance in theological controversy in the early modern period, with John Calvin propounding a severely logical view against which others reacted. Calvin was influenced by St. Augustine's position on predestination, as developed by Martin Luther in terms of double predestination (although a more moderate position became adopted as Lutheran doctrine).<sup>16</sup> According to Calvin, Christ's Atonement was only for the elect (a doctrine known as limited Atonement). Those predestined to damnation could not escape their fate. In England, this doctrine was enforced in Article 17 of the Thirty-Nine Articles promulgated in 1562. According to the Reformed theological doctrine of predestination, redemption was by God, who did not so reward human merit (a tenet which Reformed theologians held to be contrary to Roman Catholic belief). Various beliefs followed from the doctrine of predestination: the irresistibility of grace and that the predestined could not forfeit salvation. Furthermore, these tenets were consistent with the important Protestant belief of justification by grace through faith (Wallace 214). Some followers of

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<sup>16</sup> For an account of Augustine, Luther and Calvin on the subject of predestination see 'predestination' (ODCC 1328-9).

Calvin, including Perkins and Ames in the English context, put forward the strict form of the doctrine of predestination that God as a first priority elected the saved and reprobated the damned, before decreeing the creation of mankind and permitting Adam to fall. This version of predestination is known as supralapsarianism (Wallace 218).

Dewey D. Wallace points out that, for Puritans, the doctrine of predestination and its associated beliefs were essential to the assurance of believers that they would be saved, as these matters were expounded in affectionate terms in Puritan schemes of doctrine (215). Walsham outlines how providence was perceived and interpreted to give such assurance. She calls this experimental providentialism. The godly were to scrutinise particular<sup>17</sup> providences, both calamities (chastisements) and mercies. The chastisements were to be seen as discipline, drawing them from sensual pleasures. They also strengthened patience and faith, and were for the good of the chastised individual. God's affliction of the elect in this world meant that they would not be damned in the next life. Whereas adversity only made the wicked more recalcitrant, the godly were to rejoice in their affliction (Walsham, Providence 15-17). Walsham observes that by such providentialism, both the setbacks and the successes of the godly could be interpreted as signifying divine approval. However, she also points out that such providentialism might make the godly anxious on account of the unintelligibility of God's predestinarian plan. The association between affliction and guilt could make the sufferer feel that they were to blame, and this could combine with a sense of human depravity to give rise to despair that they

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<sup>17</sup> According to Walsham, 'particular providence' generally refers to God's dealings with humanity, or, more specifically, with his chosen people. This is by contrast with 'universal providence', which refers to God's programme for the macrocosm (Walsham, Providence 12).

were reprobate (Walsham, Providence 17). Walsham, towards the end of her section on experimental providentialism, concludes that Calvinist providentialism was important in shaping Puritan piety. It was a central element in what R.T. Kendall calls ‘experimental predestinarianism’ (Walsham, Providence 19<sup>18</sup>). Puritans believed that God was preoccupied with them, and that sometimes he was pleased with them, but at other times he was angry with them (Walsham, Providence 19). Walsham points out that Puritan journals and letters are full of mentions of the blessings and judgements which the writer sought to interpret as assurance that they were amongst the elect (Providence 20). Bernard may well have applied interpretations in terms of experimental providentialism to his own life, and have encouraged his parishioners to do so also. This would be one explanation of why he notices instances of providence so often in the commentary.

The severity of the Reformed position on predestination produced a reaction which was most authoritatively expressed by the Dutch theologian Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609). According to him, predestination related to God’s knowledge of human choice in advance (Wallace 214). He endeavoured to emphasise God’s mercy by maintaining that God elects those who will show faith at his offer of salvation (‘Arminius, Jacobus’). After his death his doctrines were set out in a ‘Remonstrance’ which was signed by some of his followers. This document was considered at the Synod of Dort (1618-19), and was condemned (‘Arminius, Jacobus’). However, the controversy about Arminius’s doctrine, which had developed in England, most notably, continued there (Wallace 214-5), as in the Netherlands (‘Arminius, Jacobus’). Arminian doctrines came to be associated with the ecclesiastical

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<sup>18</sup> Walsham cites R.T. Kendall, Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649 (Oxford, 1979), esp. pt. III.

authorities in England (Wallace 215), and one petition to Charles I complains that the puritan petitioners are condemned for preaching in conformity with the Calvinist Article 17 of the Anglican Church, while Pelagian and Arminian heresies are preached and printed without censure (Brook, Introduction 1:74<sup>19</sup>).

There were many variations on the basic Puritan and Arminian positions on predestination and it is hardly necessary to explore these. Bernard himself can be seen to have modified his position on predestination in the course of his career. In doing so, he was not only reacting to developments in the field, but was also influenced by his experience in his pastoral work with his parishioners. In his Large Catechisme (1602) Bernard clearly accepts Article 17. He distinguishes between the reprobate, ‘whome God hath not decreed to save, to manifest his justice’ and the elect ‘beeing predestinate to eternall life’ (Large Catechisme 9). However, by the time he wrote Ruths Recompence he seems to have adopted a more moderate Puritan position. He even appears to have perhaps slightly leaned towards Arminianism, at this time when Arminians and their opponents were locked in conflict.

Bernard’s tendency towards moderation, at the least, can be detected in his exposition of Boaz’s praying for a full reward for Ruth in Ruth chapter 2. According to Bernard, Scripture shows that God has promised to reward good works, although the reward must not (and here Bernard attacks Roman Catholic doctrine) be expected on the grounds of merit. The reward will be in the afterlife and sometimes also in this life (RR 182). Bernard may have the justified godly in mind. In this case, his subsequent declaration that this is an incentive to virtue and good works (RR 182) would seem to have a polemical intent. It can be seen as consistent with his being

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<sup>19</sup> Brook cites Prynne’s *Cant. Doome*, p. 165.

aligned with moderate Calvinists, who were concerned that credibility might be given to the argument that Calvinism discouraged moral effort (Wallace 218). Bernard can be interpreted as endeavouring to refute this argument. However, this passage may also be read as not concerning exclusively the good works of the godly following from their justification but as an encouragement of people in general to make an effort rather than assume that they cannot alter their fate. In this context, Bernard's claim that good works will be rewarded in the afterlife can be seen as encouraging people to aspire to salvation. Bernard may have been drawn to such a position by his pastoral concern for his parishioners.

Bernard even seems to lean slightly towards the Arminian tenet (see 'Arminianism') that believers can fall from grace, in his exposition of the women's leaving for Judah in Ruth 1.7. He points out that Orpah later gave up her selfless mission, and teaches that it is a special grace to continue in goodness to the end. He explains that those biblical characters who only got as far as making a good beginning were called but not effectually, not being elected (according to Matt. 22.14). This reflected the fact that they were full of hypocrisy (42). It would appear that in Bernard's view such individuals never began the redemption process. However, he goes on to make the warning, 'let none thinke well of themselves for faire beginnings, because they that continue to the end, shall onely be saved' (42). In endeavouring to discourage complacency, he seems to suggest that even those who have progressed along the chain of redemption may fall from grace.

Although these passages in Ruths Recompence can be interpreted as showing that Bernard diverged from strict Calvinism, the commentary also shows that he did not always adopt the strategy used by moderate Calvinists of emphasising the



election of the saved rather than the reprobation of the damned (Wallace 218). In Ruth chapter 1, Bernard derives from Naomi and her sons outliving Elimelech the observation that God causes some people to live longer than others. According to Bernard, God lengthens the lives of certain of his own so that they can further repent, and lengthens the lives of certain of those who will perish for their greater condemnation (23-4). Here, Bernard explicitly spells out the predicament of the damned. However, his Common Catechisme of 1630, which was approximately contemporaneous with Ruths Recompence, suggests that he did not have a strict Calvinist view of the reprobate. In his Common Catechisme, he follows the 1549 Prayer Book catechism's teaching that Christ has redeemed all mankind (sig. B2v). In teaching this, Bernard may indicate that he does not hold a strict Calvinist view of limited Atonement but rather is more inclined to the Arminian position on the Atonement. According to the Remonstrance, the Atonement was sufficient for all men but only efficacious for the man with faith ('Arminianism'). Bernard teaches on the same page of this catechism that the respondent and '*All the elect people of God*' are sanctified by God the holy Ghost. It may be deduced from this that he takes the elect to refer to the godly community, which may be expanded by converting ideally all the ungodly, rather than an exclusive group. The same deduction may be drawn from a declaration by Bernard in his treatment of the lemma following his exposition of Boaz's praying for a full reward for Ruth in Ruth chapter 2, discussed above. He makes this declaration regarding the Israelites, God's chosen people (who are meant, he notes, in the expression of '*the Lord God of Israel*' in the lemma expounded here). According to Bernard, citing Gal. 6.16, they were 'a type of the Elect number, called The Israel of God' (RR 182-3). 'The Israel of God' refers to the early Christian

church composed of believing Jews and Gentiles or the believing Jewish element in it (NIV<sup>20</sup>). Bernard evidently loosely equates the church members with the elect. On this occasion, he does speak, like a moderate Calvinist, of election without mentioning reprobation.

It can be concluded that Bernard adopted beliefs about predestination from various positions on the spectrum available to him in the course of his career. Despite his early strict Calvinism, by the late 1620s he was articulating views characteristic of moderate Calvinists; he certainly did not align himself with the petitioners to Charles I who would not tolerate any compromise on Article 17. It may well be the case that his reluctance to teach a strict Calvinist doctrine of predestination was, in part, a consequence of his pastoral values and concern for the salvation of those in his parish.

Ruths Recompence thus states the views of a Puritan clergyman on a number of issues relating to society and the spiritual welfare of the godly. It now remains to consider how he evaluates women's conduct in this book.

#### **4. BIBLICAL COMMENTARIES: THE TRADITION**

Bernard's commentary on Ruth had precedents dating back to before the Christian era. This earlier analysis of Ruth gave rise to issues and controversies with which Bernard engaged. Annotations in this edition indicate significant instances of Bernard's difference from or development of points made by his predecessors. The

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<sup>20</sup> Note on Gal. 6.16.

women's conduct in chapter 3 caused some difficulty for interpretations of the story even before the medieval period, as will be discussed below. However, it is Bernard's early modern predecessors who receive particular attention in the annotations here for this chapter, as they evidence contemporary concerns about women's conduct.

#### **4.1 INTERPRETATION OF THE BOOK OF RUTH PRIOR TO THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD**

It may be helpful to say a little about the earlier interpretations of Ruth, particularly those in sources referred to by Bernard, and the authorship where it is known. The term interpretation here, in connection with the earliest, that is, ancient sources, indicates paraphrase, including that used in translation. Bernard mentions a number of ancient sources: the Septuagint, the Antiquities by the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, and the Syriac version. Bernard would also have been familiar with the ancient Jewish Targum of Ruth, which is cited by Lavater, whose own commentary on Ruth is cited by Bernard (see below). Of these ancient interpretations, the Septuagint was the earliest to be begun, having its origin in ca. the 3rd century BC, when it was undertaken under Ptolemy II in Alexandria, Egypt. It was a Greek translation of a Hebrew original. The Septuagint ultimately included the books known as the Apocrypha in the English Bible. The Septuagint as a whole was first printed in Cardinal Ximenes' Complutensian Polyglott (1514-17), and there were later editions in 1518 and 1586 ('The Septuagint'). It was thus accessible for Bernard. Josephus's The Jewish Antiquities dates to 93-94 AD, and his account of

the story of Ruth constitutes section ix of Book V of this book. The Editio princeps of the Greek text of Josephus's works with Latin translation was published in Basle in 1544. It may be concluded that this work also could have been accessed by Bernard. The Targum consists of Aramaic (Chaldean) translations and paraphrases of the Hebrew Bible, which were made when Hebrew was no longer the usual language of the Jews. The earliest parts of the Targum date from at least the first century AD but the date of the Targum of Ruth is uncertain (MET, Introduction xvi; BTR, Introduction 11-12). In the medieval and early modern periods, the Targum was alluded to as 'The Chaldean paraphrase' or a similar expression. Bernard lived at this time, when the Targum was thus referred to by Lavater and others. Finally, the Syriac versions of the Bible, to which Bernard makes reference (respecting the New Testament; see RR 190-1), were accurate translations into Syriac, a branch of Aramaic, and were made for Syrian Christians. The Syriac Versions of the Old Testament include translations of an early date, including the Peshitta of about the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century ('Syriac'; 'Syriac Versions of the Bible'). These versions may well have been part of the material which informed Bernard's reading of Ruth.

In the medieval period, there were both Jewish and Christian traditions of commentaries on the Book of Ruth. Although these traditions were different, the Christian tradition drew on the ancient and medieval Jewish traditions. The authors of the medieval Jewish commentaries<sup>21</sup> will be mentioned first because of their influence on the Christian commentators. The earliest was Salmon ben Yeroham who, according to D.R.G. Beattie, 'lived in Jerusalem and wrote in the period 940-

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<sup>21</sup> The medieval Jewish commentaries on Ruth used in this edition to illuminate Bernard's text are those which are translated by D.R.G. Beattie in Jewish Exegesis of the Book of Ruth. The biographical information about the medieval Jewish commentators is drawn from this book.

960' (BJE 24). He also wrote commentaries on the Song of Songs and Lamentations. Salmon was a Qaraite scholar, that is, he did not altogether conform to the orthodox Rabbinic tradition represented notably by the Talmud. This divergence is particularly evident in his opposition to the Rabbanite position on the relationship between the law against incest and the levirate law. Bernard touches on this debate in chapter 4.<sup>22</sup> Salmon's commentary on Ruth is the longest and hence most detailed of the medieval Jewish commentaries referred to in this edition. The next commentator to be considered is Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac, generally known as 'Rashi' (1040-1105), who was born at Troyes in France. He wrote commentaries on the entire Old Testament and on the Talmud. Rashi's commentary was followed by and drawn on by 'An Anonymous Rabbi' in another commentary, in which the Anonymous Rabbi also utilised the work of other earlier scholars besides Rashi. (BJE 33-4). This commentary has been dated to the twelfth century (BJE 35). Another Ruth commentary was written by Abraham ben Meir ibn Ezra (1092/3-1167), who, according to Beattie, 'wrote commentaries on the Torah, Isaiah, the Twelve Prophets, Psalms, Job, the Megilloth, Daniel and, perhaps, on some of the remaining books of the bible' (BJE 35). The last Jewish medieval Ruth commentator possibly relevant to early modern writers is David Qimhi (1160-1235). He 'wrote

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<sup>22</sup> See p. 377, where, in expounding Ruth 4.5, Bernard addresses the question, whether the levirate law refers to natural brothers or only near kinsmen. The alternatives in this question represent the different solutions to this issue debated by the Rabbanites and Qaraites – that is, how to reconcile the levirate law with the prohibition of sexual relations between a man and his brother's wife. For the Rabbanites, the levirate law refers to natural brothers and is an exception to the law against incest; for the Qaraites, the levirate law does not refer to natural brothers. Bernard expresses the view that natural brothers are meant, although, in the absence of a brother, the nearest kinsman is to marry the widow.

commentaries on Genesis, the Prophets, the Psalms and Chronicles', and possibly on the other biblical books also.<sup>23</sup>

The medieval Christian commentators range from Ambrose (c.339-397) to Nicholas of Lyra (1270-?1349).<sup>24</sup> The main landmarks were the composition of a standard Bible, the compiling of an amalgamated commentary on the Bible known as the Ordinary Gloss, and the composition of independent commentaries on Ruth. Jerome (c.342-420) translated the Bible from the Greek and Hebrew, his Vulgate translation becoming the standard text in western Europe. He wrote 'introductory prologues to each of the biblical books or groups of books, which were the standard approaches to the overall meaning of the text' (MET xiv). He also wrote a Book of Interpretations of Hebrew Names, an issue of some significance to later commentators, including Bernard.

Contributions from patristic and more recent commentators were included in the Ordinary Gloss on the Bible, which was probably begun in Laon in the early twelfth century, but was added to over the course of time. Production of the Gloss became centred in Paris, and its format consisted of marginal and interlinear glosses on a central biblical text. The Gloss was printed from 1480-81, often with the postillae of Nicholas of Lyra from 1495. The Ruth Gloss is made up of changing allegorical readings (with Naomi, for instance being identified with the Synagogue as well as the Church), glosses on words and explanations of obscure phrases. The Ruth Gloss and other allegorical/analogical readings of Ruth will not be discussed in

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<sup>23</sup> BJE 40. Beattie quotes: C. Levias, The Jewish Encyclopaedia (New York and London, 1901-06) vii 494.

<sup>24</sup> The medieval commentators referred to in this edition are ones whose comments are translated by Lesley Smith in Medieval Exegesis in Translation, and I have drawn on the introduction of this work by Smith in compiling the account which follows. Smith selected authors who were central in medieval scholastic life who wrote commentaries of manageable size.

detail here since Bernard, like the preceding early modern Ruth commentators, generally did not make allegorical/analogical interpretations. According to Lesley Smith, '[a]lmost the entire *Ruth* Gloss is taken from Rabanus Maurus's (776/84-856) *Commentary on Ruth*' (MET xv). Rabanus was 'a highly influential theologian, poet, and churchman who held the offices of Abbot of Fulda and Archbishop of Mainz' (MET xv). The Ruth Gloss also contains material from Isodore of Seville's interpretation of Ruth, which is mentioned below as an independent commentary. Isodore (c.560-636) was a Spanish monk and bishop. The Ruth Gloss and Gloss Additions also draw on a number of other sources. These include Ambrose, who was Bishop of Milan. His works include On Virginity, from which Bernard quotes in Ruths Recompence (257). One Gloss Addition attributed to Jerome identifies Ruth as one of the women sinners in the genealogy of Christ (MET 35). Another early scholar who appears as a source of Gloss Additions, including one mentioned below as pertaining to the conduct of the women in the story, is the Greek monk and bishop of Cyrrhus, Theodoret (c.393-c.466).

In the medieval period a number of independent commentaries on Ruth were also produced. Isodore of Seville interpreted Ruth as a Christian allegory, and, as has been mentioned, was drawn on in the Ruth Gloss. Another treatment of Ruth was by Peter Comester (d. c.1179), a biblical scholar and chancellor of the University of Paris, in his Scholastic History. This work was based on the Old Testament but included 'interpolations from patristic and pagan writers' (MET xvii). Comestor draws considerably on Josphesus's account of Ruth. Two later medieval Ruth commentaries, by Hugh of St. Cher (c.1200-1263) and Nicholas of Lyra were both cited in Ruth commentaries in the early modern period. It can be concluded that

Bernard is likely to have been familiar with them. Hugh of St. Cher was a Dominican in the St. Jacques convent in Paris. He glossed the whole Bible. His commentary on Ruth contains numerous biblical quotations, and is split into literal and allegorical/mystical senses. The latter incorporates material from the Gloss. Nicholas of Lyra was a biblical exegete who ‘demonstrated an extensive knowledge of Hebrew and Jewish teaching and became thoroughly acquainted with the Talmud, Midrash, and the works of Rashi’.<sup>25</sup> In 1300 he entered the Franciscan convent in Verneuil. He was sent to Paris about 1301, where he attained academic prominence at the University of Paris. In the early 1320s he began his major work, a Literal postill on the whole Bible, completing it in 1331. He wrote his Moral Postill on the whole Bible between 1333 and 1339. This Postill consisted of typological and allegorical interpretations. It was a ‘shorter and less ambitious’ work than the Literal Postill. (Krey and Smith, Introduction 6). The popularity of Nicholas’s Postills is evident in the large number of manuscripts, and printed editions from 1471-72 (Krey and Smith, Introduction 8, 11).

Nicholas of Lyra’s use of earlier Jewish commentary, particularly Rashi’s, in his postills on Ruth shows a paradoxical approach of, on the one hand, endorsing this material, and, on the other hand, condemning the Jewish conscious rejection of Christ (L. Smith, ‘Rewards’ 45-58). It is immediately evident that Nicholas attributes most Jewish views to ‘the Hebrews’ (eg. MET 57, 58, 59); he seldom acknowledges Rashi specifically. This may reflect his ambivalence towards Jewish commentary, in that he may have been unwilling to recognise the authority of any single medieval Jewish commentator.

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<sup>25</sup> Krey and Smith, Introduction 1. The account of Nicholas of Lyra which follows draws on this Introduction.



Walton and Walton have provided a helpful insight into Christian, particularly Italian Roman Catholic, reactions to Jewish writings, especially the work of Rashi, in the period between Nicholas of Lyra and the early modern Ruth commentators (385-400).<sup>26</sup> Prior to the Counter-Reformation there was a blossoming of Hebrew studies by Christian scholars aiming to convert Jews or simply to illuminate the scriptures. In this period Rashi's Commentary on the Bible was published in Rome in 1470 and in Reggio in 1475. Furthermore, '[b]y 1518, Daniel Bomberg in Venice had published the first edition of the *Magna Biblia Rabbinica*, an authoritative text of the Bible with Aramaic Targum [. . .] and standard rabbinical commentaries. Subsequent editions appeared in 1525 and 1548.' (Walton and Walton 386) These publications would have made Rashi's commentary, at least, on Ruth accessible to commentators in the early modern period. However, the Roman Catholic Church reacted against Hebrew scholarship in the Counter-Reformation because it was associated with Protestant leaders, and this fuelled suspicion that Jewish scholars meant to mislead Christians. Pope Paul IV ordered the censorship and expurgation of Hebrew books. In particular, a copy of Rashi's Pentateuch commentary was expurgated, not only of views contrary to all Christians, but also for opinions, for instance about Rome, which supported the Protestant Reformers.

Walton and Walton's discussion of the Roman Catholic censors' objections to those of Rashi's views which coincided with Protestant opinion usefully illustrates the reasons why the Protestant early modern Ruth commentators may have been inclined to consider Jewish commentary on the Bible leniently. Bernard may illustrate this when he cites the Jewish Interpreters of a passage in Leviticus (RR

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<sup>26</sup> The account which follows draws on this work of Walton and Walton.

359). The Jewish comments noted by Walton and Walton which were offensive to all Christians, on the other hand, include what Lavater states to be the reason for his discounting their interpretation, that is, Jewish disbelief in the Trinity (for example, Lavater 7v-8r, see below). Topsell expresses his view that Jews are amongst those whom he regards as lost souls (Topsell 126, see below).

Attention is drawn in the annotations of this edition to various points in the ancient interpretations and medieval commentaries which might have influenced the views of the early modern commentators. Here, some observations will be made about the significant amount of recognition in these earlier sources of the sexual dangers of Ruth's approach to Boaz alone at night in chapter 3. This recognition anticipates the response of the early modern commentators, but has not been discussed in detail in the annotations. This is because the main focus of the edition is on how the early modern commentators evaluated the conduct of Naomi and Ruth in the light of the conduct literature and values of their own society.

Even in the ancient interpretations, the dangers in the situation are noted.

According to verse 8 of the Targum:

*In the middle of the night the man was startled, and he was afraid, and his flesh became soft like turnip from fear. He saw a woman lying at his feet, but he restrained his desire and did not approach her, just as Joseph the Righteous did, who refused to approach the Egyptian woman, the wife of his master, just as Paltiel bar Laish the Pious did, who placed a sword between himself and Michal daughter of Saul, wife of David, whom he refused to approach. (BTR 26-7)<sup>27</sup>*

In Salmon ben Yeroham's medieval Jewish commentary, physical contact between Ruth and Boaz is depicted: 'For she parted his feet and it hurt him and he trembled, for he was not accustomed to having someone sleep with him and he was

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<sup>27</sup> Beattie's convention is that departures from the Hebrew and the Targum's additional material are italicised (BTR, Introduction 12).

afraid.’ (BJE 73) Rashi represents Ruth as realising that, when dressed according to Naomi’s instructions, she would look like a prostitute: ‘[S]he said, “If I go down all dressed up, anyone who meets me and sees me will think I am a harlot”. Therefore she went down in the first place to the threshing-floor and afterwards adorned herself as her mother-in-law had instructed her.’ (BJE 107) In his comment on verse 8 (‘and the man was startled’) Rashi claims that the Hebrew means that there was a physical encounter between Ruth and Boaz: ‘He thought it was a demon and he wanted to cry out but she seized him and clasped him in her arms.’ (BJE 107) Again, regarding the same verse (‘and behold a woman’): ‘He put his hand on her head and recognized that it was a woman.’ (BJE 107) These representations of physical interactions between Ruth and Boaz by Salmon, and, especially, Rashi, would have fuelled the worst fears of any early modern commentators who might have read them.

Early Christian reactions to Ruth’s conduct include the claim expressed in the Gloss Addition attributed to Jerome and referred to above, that Ruth was one of the women sinners in the genealogy of Christ. The influence of this view is evident in that it is endorsed by Hugh of St. Cher (MET 41). Theodoret, in a Gloss Addition, feels he has to refute the construction that Naomi’s advice was immoral: ‘Therefore, she [Naomi] suggests to her that she sleep at Boaz’s feet, not that she might sell her body (for the words of the narrative signify the opposite); rather, she trusts the man’s temperance and judgement. Moreover, the actions corroborate the words.’ (MET 33) The later medieval commentator Peter Comestor represents Boaz as commenting on the dangers of the situation when Ruth answered his request that she identify herself with a request of marriage: Boaz ‘declared to her that chastity would be safeguarded in such an unlawful situation’ (MET 38).

Nicholas of Lyra makes a more detailed analysis of the threshing floor scene. His condemnation of Naomi's advice provides the basis of early modern evaluations of the plan:

On this point, some people say that Naomi had not sinned herself, because she was seeking to revive the name of the dead man through the law of matrimony. However, the opposite seems rather to be true, because the method of looking for a husband here was not a good one (that is to say, in the dark), and also because there was a closer relative than Boaz, who ought to have been the first to be asked (as is explained later), and so someone would be hard done by unless he voluntarily ceded his rights in Law. It is on account of all this that Boaz told Ruth that she should conceal what she did. (MET 61)

Nicholas follows Rashi in perceiving physical contact between Ruth and Boaz in so far as he observes that Boaz touched Ruth's head: 'The Hebrew says, 'And he feared' or, 'he embraced,' because he stretched out his hand and touched Ruth's head and knew by this that she was a woman, because women have heads which feel different from men's heads, and which are covered.' (MET 61).

The subsequent development of the tradition of interpreting the conduct issues of the threshing floor scene is traced below in relation to Bernard's interpretation. It will also be considered in the annotations to Bernard's commentary.

## **4.2 EARLY MODERN COMMENTARIES**

For Protestants, emerging from the European Reformation, the Bible was the word of God, dictated by the Holy Spirit. It was their ultimate authority. Since the Bible translations available in the early modern period were derived from texts in a number of languages, principally Hebrew and Greek, those who interpreted these translations for the benefit of the laity had to be scholars who knew these languages.

Bernard had two early modern predecessors who wrote commentaries on Ruth, and all three undertook academic study to prepare them for this role of biblical interpretation. In addressing Ruth, then, they set out to apply their scholarship to making the book intelligible to their readers, many of whom were less learned than they were. Learned as they were, their interpretations were influenced by the assumptions and practices of their own society, resulting in anachronisms. One aspect of this characteristic has been discussed by Naomi Tadmor in her article, 'Women and Wives: the Language of Marriage in Early Modern English Biblical Translations'.

Tadmor does not confine her attention to Protestant translations of the early modern period. She also draws on earlier translations, including that of John Wycliffe (c. 1384 and c. 1395) and also on the Roman Catholic Rheims Douai version (see Tadmor 3, 5 et al). However, her focus is on the Church of England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (see, especially, Tadmor 12-14). According to Tadmor, a range of English Bible Translations, from the Wyclifite Bible to the King James Bible (1611), modify the sense of the Hebrew original in the interest of Christian orthodoxy regarding marriage (3-4). She observes that the Hebrew Bible does not contain words corresponding to certain English words relating to marriage (2, 20), and explains that 'the structural premise of many biblical narratives rests on the actual or potential plurality of female partners within the patriarchal household' (20). Nevertheless, she points out, the English Bible of the early modern period 'became saturated with a discourse pertaining to monogamous Christian unions' (20). According to Tadmor, the 'monogamous idiom of marriage' was reinforced by adjacent commentaries and notes (3). Furthermore, she draws attention to the

propagation of a ‘religiously guided matrimonial ideology’ in printed literature. At the same time, church control over marriage increased (12).

Bernard and his two early modern predecessors, Ludwig Lavater and Edward Topsell, all illustrate the ethos of their societies.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, these societies have much in common as is indicated by the links between the three commentaries. Both Lavater’s successors were evidently familiar with his work, and it seems certain that Bernard also engaged with Topsell’s commentary.

#### 4.2.1 LAVATER AND TOPSELL

Lavater was born in 1527 in Kyburg and died in Zurich in 1586. He married Margareta Bullinger, daughter of Heinrich Bullinger, the Swiss religious reformer, in 1550. Lavater married his second wife, Adelheid Struppler in 1565. He was schooled in Kappel am Albis and Zurich, and studied in Strasbourg, Paris and Lausanne (1545-1547). Then Lavater travelled in North Italy and to Grisons. He became Archdeacon (1550) then minister of the Grossmunster and chief pastor of the church in Zurich (1585). He wrote and translated extensively, and is best known for his Gespensterbuch (Book of Ghosts, 1569). His description of the church in Zurich (1559) and his two sermons on the plague (1563) were also influential (Bachtold, Internet source<sup>29</sup>). Lavater’s work on ghosts in Latin, with the title De spectris, lemuribus et magnis atque insolitis fragoribus, was translated into English by Robert Harrison with the title, Of Ghostes and Spirites Walking by Nyght (1572). Lavater

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<sup>28</sup> Bernard, in particular, illustrates Tadmor’s argument regarding anachronistic early modern representations of biblical relationships. See Ruths Recompence, especially pp. 25, 27-9, 294-5.

<sup>29</sup> This article was translated from French by Rose Artault.

touches on the subject of spirits in his commentary on the Book of Ruth when he suggests in expounding chapter 3 that Boaz might have suspected a spirit in the form of a body lay at his feet, and cites stories about spirits (99v). Lavater also published biblical commentaries besides the one on the Book of Ruth, and various sermons.

Lavater's commentary on Ruth was published in Latin in 1578. It was translated into English by a child aged eleven, Ephraim Pagitt. This translation, The book of Ruth expounded in twenty eight sermons, was published in 1586. Ephraim Pagitt (1574-1646) later matriculated at Christ Church, Oxford at the age of eighteen. According to Dyton, he spoke fifteen or sixteen languages (ODNB). This linguistic ability would suggest the competence of his translation of Lavater's commentary on Ruth. Pagitt went on to become a clergyman, and published a work attacking Roman Catholicism and another on heresies (Dyton, ODNB).

Lavater draws attention in the commentary to its relevance to the issue of famine. He alludes to famine in his own locality in his exposition of Ruth 3.14-18, specifically Boaz's giving Ruth barley on the threshing floor: 'At this time thou hast great occasion offered to thee of exercising thy liberality, in so great persecutions of the godly, and in such skarcetie of corne.' (109v) Moreover, Lavater later wrote Three Christian Sermons [. . .] of Famine and Dearth of Victuals, an English translation of which was published in 1596.

Many of the other issues Lavater engages with arise more specifically from previous interpretations of the Book of Ruth. He is scholarly in his reference to these, for the range of earlier sources he draws on is wide and reflects his linguistic ability. In particular, he shows knowledge of Hebrew when he discusses Hebrew words in connection with Naomi being the nurse of Obed, Ruth's son (152r-152v).

He refers to the Septuagint on occasion on linguistic points, for example, regarding the meaning of Ruth's tarrying a little in the house in Ruth 2.7 (59r). Lavater also draws from time to time on Josephus's rendering of the story of the Book of Ruth. For instance, in commenting on the final stages of the threshing floor scene in Ruth 3.14-18, he prefers Josephus's interpretation 'that he badd her to be gone, before hee raised up his servants'. He rejects the interpretation '(as some will have it)'<sup>30</sup> that Boaz commanded his servants not to tell that Ruth was at the floor during the night (Lavater 108r).<sup>31</sup>

Lavater refers quite often to the Targum of Ruth, which he describes according to its composition, as, for instance, 'the Chalde paraphrase' (131r). However, he does not accept the Targum's interpretations unreservedly. A striking instance of his scepticism occurs when he writes of the Targum's assessment of Boaz in its expansion of Ruth 4.21: 'The Chaldei interpreter calleth him a righteous man, and hee writeth that for his equitie the land of Israell was preserved, from the invasions of the enimies, and delivered, from the famine, by his prayers. But from whence he hath this I know not.' (160v)

Lavater appears to have accessed the medieval Jewish tradition mainly through Nicholas of Lyra's commentary. However, he does not always acknowledge Nicholas as his source when citing Jewish views which Nicholas also cites. He also follows Nicholas's practice of attributing most Jewish views to 'the Hebrews'

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<sup>30</sup> This interpretation is given in the Targum: 'he said *to his servant*, "Let it not be known *to any man* that the woman came to the threshing-floor."' (BTR 28.)

<sup>31</sup> Josephus's account reads as follows at this point: '[A]t daybreak, ere his servants began to move to their work, he roused her and bade her take as much of the barley as she could carry and be off to her mother-in-law, before anyone should see that she had slept there, since it was wise to guard against scandal of that kind, and the more so when nothing had passed.' (Josephus [Loeb] 149) Thus, Josephus's version emphasises the need to avoid anyone being aware that Ruth had spent the night with Boaz so that scandal would not arise. This concern is consistent with Lavater's anxiety that others might have been offended or have found the event a stumbling block.



(Lavater 7v, 8r, 16r). That Lavater too was ambivalent towards Jewish opinion is evident in his discussion, when he is expounding Ruth 1.1-2, of a Jewish interpretation of the validity of Elimelech's behaviour in leaving Bethlehem Judah. He observes that 'the Hebrues', as reported by Nicholas of Lyra, say that the wealthy Elimelech left because during the famine many of his kinsmen and poor men made demands on him, and he did not want to be troubled or to spend his goods (7v). Lavater asserts that this motive is inexcusable. Nevertheless, despite the fact that Nicholas appears to uphold the view he attributes to the Hebrews in his 'Moral Sense', Lavater goes on to denounce Jewish scriptural interpretation:

But who can but marvell from whence the HEBRUES have these fantasies, they doe bring in many monstrous fables in the expounding of the holy Scriptures. For when they had cast away Jesus Christ the light of the world, they wer worthy to walke in darknesse. (8r)

Further references Lavater makes to the Jews also indicate his ambivalence towards them for religious reasons.<sup>32</sup> However, he was willing to give them credence on occasion.<sup>33</sup> This claim is reinforced by the fact that there is evidence that he was familiar with, although not wholly in agreement with, Salmon ben Yeroham's commentary on the Book of Ruth. Lavater shows his scholarly thoroughness in explaining and adopting a position in the Jewish debate over the consistency of the levirate law with the law against incest. His position is different from that of the Qaraite, Salmon, that is, he sides with the Rabbanites. This difference consists largely in Salmon's broader interpretation of the word 'brother' regarding the levirate law (BJE 86-7; Lavater 123r-126r). However, Lavater agrees with Salmon that the incest law was applicable after the death of a party (BJE 88; Lavater 123r-124r). Another indication that Lavater may have been influenced by Salmon is that there is

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<sup>32</sup> See, for example, Lavater 158v-159r.

<sup>33</sup> See, for example, Lavater 8v.

a degree of resonance between Salmon's defending Elimelech's going to Moab in chapter 1 against critics (BJE 51), and Lavater's consideration of those who accuse and those who defend this deed of Elimelech (10v-12r).

While Christian medieval interpretations and translations can be a vehicle for views which they acknowledge to be Jewish, Lavater recognises that they have a contribution to make in their own right. He alludes to the 'old translation' a number of times. This would have been Jerome's Vulgate. On one occasion, in discussing Ruth 2.17-19, in which Ruth returns to Naomi after gleaning, Lavater notes a divergence between the 'old translation' and the text he himself is following: 'Before her mother in lawe heard the name of BOAZ, shee sayd, blessed be hee that hath knowne thee. The old translation, hath who hath pittied thee.' (82r) Lavater goes on to observe that '[t]he word of knowing is diversly understood in the holy scriptures.' (82r) He indicates that pitying is the meaning of knowing in this instance: 'So in this place who hath known thee, that is, who hath done thee a good turn? She blessed him because he had pitie on her.' (82v) The 'old translation' here makes the meaning clear. Lavater also evidently draws on other parts of Nicholas of Lyra's commentary on the Book of Ruth than those parts which Nicholas derives from the Jewish tradition. This can be seen in Lavater's assessment of the conduct of Naomi and Ruth in chapter 3, which includes the comment that Ruth was due not to Boaz but to a nearer kinsman. This kinsman would have been injured unless he renounced his right (Lavater 95v). This point is found in Nicholas's criticism of Naomi (MET 61).

However, Lavater rejects allegorical interpretations, which are characteristic of Nicholas's 'Moral Sense' of the Book of Ruth. These interpretations make

identifications between Old Testament figures and New Testament institutions and figures. Such interpretations may, in the case of such books as the Book of Ruth and the Song of Solomon, have served to protect the reader from discomfort arising from the literal sense. At the end of his commentary Lavater emphatically states his preference for the literal meaning:

Some doe make BOAZ a figure of the Messias and RUTH of the Church the spouse of the Messias. I doe not denie but that hee with his spouse is diversly figured in the scriptures, but I had rather follow the simple and literall meaning of the place etcetera. They which doe delight in allegories let them seek them else-where. (Lavater 163v)

Lavater's commentary, accordingly, marks a departure from medieval allegorical interpretation on the Book of Ruth. Lavater may have associated allegorical interpretation with Roman Catholicism, which would explain why he rejected it. The exposition of the literal sense by Lavater and his successors includes an appraisal of the conduct of the women in the story, the central concern of this edition.

Lavater also refers to a number of sources produced by his own contemporaries and in his own locality. Munster<sup>34</sup> and the Tigurine translation are mentioned with the Septuagint regarding the meaning of Ruth's tarrying a little in the house in Ruth 2.7 (Lavater 59r). He does not express a preference for these or the other meanings he mentions. Lavater also cites Theodorus Bibliander, whom he describes as 'my most reverent maister' (109r). In one instance, Lavater gives Bibliander's opinion that Elimelech and Nahshon were brothers, whereas Nicholas of Lyra, according to Lavater, claims that it was Elimelech and Salmon who were brothers (50r). Lavater discounts Nicholas's opinion here on the grounds that it would have meant that Boaz

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<sup>34</sup> Following the reaction of the Roman Catholic Church in Italy against Hebrew scholarship in the Counter-Reformation, in the mid sixteenth century '[i]n the north the study of Hebrew continued to develop under Reuchlin, Munster, Fagius, Pellican and others.' (Walton and Walton 390)

would have been the nearest kinsman except if he had a brother (160r<sup>35</sup>). Another commentator cited more than once is Martinus Borraus, whom Lavater describes as ‘the diligent and learned expounder of gods word’ (64r-64v). In expounding the nearer kinsman’s renunciation of his right in Ruth 4.6-8, Lavater draws on Borraus in explaining why the procedure differed from the levirate law. He points out that there is no mention of Ruth being in the gate because, as Borraus writes, the kinsman was called to do his duty by Boaz and not by Ruth (129v).

Lavater can be seen to have shaped the tradition of commentary on the Book of Ruth for the early modern period. He retains some aspects of earlier interpretation, but rejects the allegorical mode and draws on some of the contributions of his contemporaries. His commentary reflects issues current in his own time, and this emphasis, particularly regarding women’s conduct, will be explored in the edition’s annotations.

The next commentator, Topsell, engaged with issues pertaining to England in the early modern period. Edward Topsell (bap. 1572, d. 1625) was a clergyman in the Church of England. Like Bernard, he attended Christ’s College, Cambridge and he graduated BA in 1591 or 1592.<sup>36</sup> He held a number of clerical posts in Sussex, Hertfordshire and Northamptonshire. He was perpetual curate of St. Botolph, Aldersgate, London from 7 April 1604. He married twice. His commentary, The Reward of Religion. Delivered in sundrie Lectures upon the Booke of Ruth was published in 1596, and its popularity can be inferred from the appearance of subsequent editions in 1597, 1601 and 1613.<sup>37</sup> Topsell set a precedent for Bernard in

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<sup>35</sup> This page is wrongly numbered 159 in Lavater’s commentary.

<sup>36</sup> Lewis, *ODNB*. The biography of Topsell which follows draws extensively on this article.

<sup>37</sup> In this Introduction the 1596 edition is referred to, unless otherwise stated.

dedicating the commentary to a woman. This action indicates the interest of both commentators in exemplary womanhood. In the Epistle Dedicatory, addressed to the Lady Margaret, Baroness Dacres of the South, Topsell represents Ruth as an ideal woman when he writes that the holy Ghost has vouchsafed to call the book of Ruth by the name of a woman ‘to the praise of the whole sexe, and everlasting commendation of her Religion’ (sig. 5v[2]). He affirms the piety of Lady Margaret and acknowledges her son’s assistance with his studies.

Topsell published other works in the form of sermons - Times Lamentation: or an exposition on the Prophet Joel, in sundry Sermons or Meditations (1599) and The House-holder: or, Perfect Man . . . Preached in three sermons lately at Hartfield in Sussex (1609). However, he is best known for his works relating to zoology, The Historie of Foure-footed Beastes (1607) and The Historie of Serpents (1608). Topsell derived much of the material in these works from the Historia animalium of another 16<sup>th</sup>-century Swiss protestant scholar, Conrad Gesner. Topsell similarly can be seen to have derived some of his Ruth commentary from earlier writers, generally without acknowledgement. But he does address issues not engaged with by Lavater or his predecessors, such as family limitation. Topsell died in London, probably in 1625.

Topsell wrote his commentary on Ruth at the end of a century characterised by economic instability. This instability was particularly marked at the time of publication because this was during a succession of bad harvests, from 1594 to 1597, which led to serious famine and a threat to the social order in the form of food riots (Hoskins 32, 38). This famine was making itself felt in 1595, with reference to which year, the Oxford preacher, George Abbot, wrote that the dearth in many areas

‘maketh the poore to pinch for hunger, and the children to cry in the street, not knowing where to have bread’.<sup>38</sup> The situation of famine was addressed by the Privy Council.<sup>39</sup> Given the prominence of the famine in the period immediately prior to the publication of Topsell’s commentary, it is not surprising that it features even on the title page. Here the relevance of the commentary to this famine is indicated: it is ‘[v]erie profitable for this present time of dearth, wherein manye are most pittifully tormented with want’.<sup>40</sup> Topsell may have been prompted to draw attention to the relevance of a commentary on Ruth to the situation of famine by Lavater’s recognition of this in his preceding commentary. Appeals made by Topsell in the commentary for supplying the poor with grain (138-9) are to be seen as supporting the efforts by the state to alleviate the famine. In the same year as Topsell’s commentary appeared, 1596, Lavater’s three Christian sermons on famine were published in English translation.<sup>41</sup> John Whitgift, the Archbishop of Canterbury, to

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<sup>38</sup> Appleby 141, quoting George Abbot, An Exposition upon the Prophet Jonah (London, 1600) 204. There may also be a topical connection with the famine in a speech by Titania in her confrontation with Oberon in A Midsummer Night’s Dream, II. i. (93-95). The putative topicality to the famine of the 1590s is part of the evidence for the hypothesis that this play was composed in 1595 or 1596 (Brooks xxxvi-xxxviii, xxxiv).

<sup>39</sup> Notably, in 1594, The renewing of certaine orders devised by the speciall commandement of the Queenes Majestie, for the reliefe and stay of the present dearth of graine within the realme in the yeere of our Lord 1586, was published with an addition concerning abuses in ale-houses and the like. This document, in turn, was the basis of A new charge given by the Queenes commandement, to all justices of peace, and all maiors, shiriffes, and all principall officers of cities, boroughs, and townes corporate, for execution of sundry orders published the last yeere for staie of dearth of graine with certaine additions nowe this present yeere to be well observed and executed, published in 1595. The Orders were subsequently reinforced by a proclamation by the Queen in 1596.

<sup>40</sup> As printed on the title page of the 1596 edition. This statement is omitted from the title page of the 1613 edition, so that the commentary is no longer linked here to the time of famine in which Topsell originally wrote. Therefore the 1613 edition can be seen to aim to appeal to later generations. However, numerous references to the famine are not erased from the 1613 edition. Examples include: ‘this present plague of dearth and famine which we now most justly endure’ (Topsell 5; 1613 ed. 6); ‘in our dayes, wherein [. . .] our want is such as hath not beene heard of these many yeeres’ (Topsell 11; 1613 ed. 13); and ‘[We] which were wont with our abundaunce to helpe other nations about us, yet now in our want we are succoured by them.’ (Topsell 19; 1613 ed. 21).

<sup>41</sup> The title page of this publication states: ‘Three Christian Sermons, made by Lodovike Lavatere, Minister of Zuricke in Helvetia, of Famine and Dearth of Victuals: And translated into English, as being verie fit for this time of our Dearth: By W. Barlow Bachelor in Divinitie [. . .] London Printed by Thomas Creede. 1596.’

whom the dedicatory epistle is addressed, prompted this work. According to this dedicatory epistle, he did so ‘to the end that all sorts among us, might in this time of *Dearth*, be directed to know both the proper cause, and the right use of this Judgement’ (Lavater, Three Christian Sermons A2r). This endorsement of Lavater’s treatment of the subject of famine may well have encouraged English people to turn to his commentary on Ruth (perhaps the English translation), and may also have stimulated them to read Topsell’s commentary. This interest could have led to the later development, beginning with Bernard, of exposition of the story for its value in times of good harvests. However, the analysis of the story entailed an interpretation of the conduct of the two leading female characters in chapter 3, and this was to cause the commentators more difficulty than they perhaps anticipated.

There are minor differences between the first three editions of Topsell’s commentary and more substantial changes in the 1613 edition, the title page of which states that it is ‘[n]ewly corrected and augmented’. The 1597, 1601 and 1613 editions show variations in spelling, abbreviation, punctuation, capitalisation and in the alignment of the printing and they correct the ‘daily and outwarde tryals’ of the godly on the title page of the 1596 edition to ‘dayly both inward & outward trials’. Such changes may well have originated in the printing shop (see Greetham 109). The 1613 edition, however, evidently results from changes by Topsell himself. In it, a number of paragraphs are subdivided or consolidated, with sections being numbered, and there are changes in the substance of the commentary. Attention is drawn to such changes when relevant in the editorial analysis of Ruths Recompence.

Topsell systematically discusses the text of Ruth, with no allegorical interpretations of the central story.<sup>42</sup> It is immediately apparent that he does not acknowledge his sources.<sup>43</sup> The marginal references consist almost exclusively of biblical passages. Nevertheless, it is evident from a number of correspondences between his and Lavater's commentaries that he is indebted to Lavater. There are some similarities in their discussions of the women's conduct and in other parts of the commentaries.<sup>44</sup> Topsell himself in his Epistle Dedicatory hints at the existence of a rival work:

Your Honour knoweth that better is it to see the smoke of ones owne Countrie, then the fire of another: so I trust my slender studies, which are but as smoke, being compared with the burning coales of others knowledge, such as dayly you heare, shall be the better accepted, because there I had my being, where your Honour hath your dwelling. (sig. 6r[2])

This statement would not exonerate him by present day standards, with respect to his commentary on Ruth, from the charge that he does not give due acknowledgement to those on whose work he draws. However, ideas of authorship and ownership of texts were not the same in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England as today.

Topsell may also have drawn on Jewish interpretation of the Book of Ruth. If so, he shows ambivalence towards the Jews like Nicholas of Lyra and Lavater. His

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<sup>42</sup> Topsell does make an allegorical interpretation concerning Rachel in his exposition of Ruth 2.16, where Boaz instructs his servants to let fall some of the sheaves for Ruth. Topsell notes the favour shown to Ruth by Boaz because of her piety, and compares it with Joseph's favouring of Benjamin over his other brothers because he was the son of Rachel, Joseph's own mother, unlike the others who were the children of other mothers. He relates this to his own society, declaring: '[T]o our mothers children, which is, the Church of Christ, the household of faith, whereof Rachel was a tipe, we must with special portions, for feeding their hunger and clothing of their nakednesse, compasse their wantes' (136). However, this interpretation is allegorical only in a limited sense. It serves to reinforce his argument, articulated in this passage, that the godly should be given the greatest share, rather than constituting part of a systematic exegesis of the Old Testament in terms of the New Testament which is the case in medieval Christian commentaries.

<sup>43</sup> However, the English marginal annotations in the 1613 edition do cite two individuals, St. Cyprian (10) and 'Master H. Smith', whom Topsell describes as a godly preacher (50).

<sup>44</sup> Some instances of similarities between the two commentaries are: Topsell 19-21 and Lavater 14r-14v; Topsell 80-81, 293 and Lavater 153v-155v; Topsell 120-123 and Lavater 68v-70r; Topsell 277-8 and Lavater 148v-149r; and Topsell 301-2 and Lavater 158r-159v.



hostility to Jews is evident in his comment on Ruth 2.12 ('under whose winges thou art come to trust'). Here, he includes Jews with those not amongst the faithful who are shielded by the wings of the Lord. Rather, he regards the Jews and those he associates with them as lost souls:

Oh fearefull estate of all Atheistes, papists, idolaters, Jewes, Turkes and Pagans, carnal men and hypocrites, despisers of the ministerie & Gospel of Christ; who as in this world they are without God, so in the world to come, shalbe separated from his presence with the Devill and his Angels<sup>45</sup>

One instance of Topsell's possibly consciously drawing on Jewish opinion occurs in his stress in his exposition of Ruth 2.14 on the fact that Boaz gave food to Ruth abundantly 'with his owne handes' (Topsell 129). This expression is also found in Nicholas of Lyra's exposition of the same verse, and is there attributed to the Hebrews. According to Nicholas, whereas in 'our' translation (which would be the Vulgate) Ruth herself prepared her food, the Hebrew says that food was prepared for her. He explains that food was produced from new grain, which 'Boaz gave Ruth with his own hand, as the Hebrews say' (MET 60). Topsell may have read Nicholas's commentary and have chosen to draw from it this interpretation stated to have been made by the Jews, despite his hostility to Jews.

It can be concluded that it is very probable that Topsell drew quite widely on earlier interpretations of Ruth even though he did not acknowledge them.

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<sup>45</sup> Topsell (1596 ed.) 126.

#### 4.2.2. BERNARD

Bernard's Ruths Recompence (1628) represents his considered evaluation of Ruth. The story made an impression on him at an earlier date. In Josuahs Godly Resolution in conference with Caleb, touching houshold governement for well ordering a familie (1612), he draws attention to Ruth's exemplary religion, shown in her adhering alone to Naomi. He adapts her speech in Ruth 1.16-17 so that it addresses any obstacle to people's godliness (11-12). Bernard, as much as sixteen years before his commentary on the Book of Ruth was published, evidently sees Ruth as a model for piety for his own society in her conduct in chapter 1. The commentary reflects his reading and reflection on the book in at least this interval.

Like Topsell, Bernard dedicates his commentary on the Book of Ruth to a woman. In Bernard's case this is Lady Frances, Countess of Warwick. He draws attention to the fact that she contributed towards his maintenance at Cambridge University and still gives him favours (sig. A3v). She was a daughter of Sir Christopher Wray whose second husband was Robert Rich, earl of Warwick (N. Jones, ODNB). As has been noted, she and her sister, Isabel, financed Bernard's studies at Christ's College Cambridge. Bernard acknowledges the assistance of the sisters in other books he published, besides Ruths Recompence (Grosart, 'Richard Bernard' 314-5). Frances Rich is also addressed in the prefatory material of books by other authors. One of these is a translation by Abraham Darcie of William Camden's Annales the true and royall history of the famous empresse Elizabeth Queene of England France and Ireland &c. (1625) (Williams, Personal Index). By

addressing Rich in a life of Queen Elizabeth, Darcie associates this patroness of literature with a supremely powerful female monarch.

The main part of the dedicatory epistle of Ruths Recompence consists of a defence of women, drawing on numerous biblical examples. In this defence, Bernard uses arguments earlier put forward by Aemilia Lanyer in the dedication to the virtuous reader in her Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum (1611). Lanyer too mentions Deborah and Jael and alludes to the latter's killing of Sisera. Furthermore, she also mentions Esther. Lanyer reinforces her arguments with the examples of Judith and Susanna from the Apocrypha. She, like Bernard, points out that Jesus Christ was begotten and borne by a woman, that he comforted women, and after his resurrection appeared first to a woman and sent a woman to tell the rest of his disciples of his resurrection. Lanyer, unlike Bernard, does not confine herself to women in the scriptures, but mentions that in all ages there have been women who confessed Christianity and who have been martyrs (Lanyer sig. f3v). It is significant that Bernard, amongst his many biblical examples of praiseworthy women, includes a number of those given by Lanyer. Both writers are in the tradition of the controversy about women. However, Lanyer, unlike Bernard, makes a polemical attack which frames her biblical illustrations. This attack is directed against women who speak ill of other women even though they also emulate their virtues, and against evilly disposed men. Lanyer contrasts these detractors with good Christians and honourable men, who will speak well of good women. She appeals to the good Christians and honourable men to receive her work favourably (Lanyer f3r-f3v). Bernard's epistle is rather, in effect, a catalogue of biblical good women.

Like Topsell, Bernard makes some limited allegorical interpretations,<sup>46</sup> but not about all aspects of the central story or its characters. On the contrary, his exposition is almost wholly literal, according to his preaching theory (FS, 1621 ed. 244-6). In the account below of his employment of his preaching theory in Ruths Recompence, it will be seen that Bernard specifies making allegories as a way of collecting doctrines, and that one of the allegorical interpretations in Ruths Recompence illustrates this practice.

In Ruths Recompence, Bernard uses the Authorized Version of the Bible. In the margins he cites both interpretations of Ruth and works on a variety of subjects which pertain to his discussion. Regarding the latter, he draws on Josephus, church fathers, modern Reformation writers, and standard classical authors. He even, on one occasion, cites a Roman Catholic work, by Petrus de Natalibus, and describes it in respectably Protestant terms as an ecclesiastical history, (262) although it is actually entitled Catalogus sanctorum (Lives of the Saints). Two of his sources, in particular, contributed to the shaping of Puritanism in England. Firstly, Martin Bucer (1491-1551), whose de Regno Christi is cited (212), was an important continental Reformer who was Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge University between 1549 and his death. Secondly, John Foxe's Acts and Monuments is cited (71), and this work details martyrdom in the reign of the Roman Catholic Queen Mary and continental exile (Hambrick-Stowe 191).

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<sup>46</sup> Bernard repeatedly refers to David as the type of Jesus Christ (RR 335-6, 470, 471, 472). Furthermore, he notes that '*the Kinsman the Redeemer was a type of Christ*' (RR 366), a concept which is only slightly different from one found in the commentary on the Book of Ruth of Isidore of Seville (c.560-636) (MET 7). He also gives figurative meanings for the causes he puts forward for which the levirate law was ordained. For instance, it provided for the widow to have children 'thereby typing, or figuring unto us, that the Church should not be left barren' (RR 374).

Bernard makes further marginal notes which also demonstrate his scholarly authority, which is an attribute he finds to be important for a preacher to possess (FS 35-42; FS, 1621 ed. 40-72). Like Lavater, he occasionally cites Hebrew words (for example, on pp. 18, 185) and Greek words, some from the Septuagint (see pp. 18, 190). Bernard also refers to the Syriac translation of the Bible (see pp. 190-1). Sometimes, Latin expressions occur in the margins (for example, on pp. 143, 187, 263).

Bernard's commentary on Ruth evidently draws most extensively on the interpretations of Ruth of his Protestant early modern predecessors, Lavater and Topsell. Although Bernard cites a French Franciscan commentator on Ruth, Feuarentius, he does so to disagree with him. He rejects the Roman Catholic interpretation that Ruth 2.20 shows that the dead may be benefited by works of charity (230). Bernard twice cites Lavater in marginal references. The first instance is a note reading 'Lavater *in hunc locum*' against a passage discussing the drinking of vinegar, oil, wine and water in Bernard's exposition of Ruth 2.14 (196). The relevant passage in Lavater's commentary, discussing these drinks, also occurs, as Bernard indicates, in the exposition of Ruth 2.14 (73v). The other marginal note mentioning Lavater lists his name with those of Junius and Drusius (two other early modern biblical scholars) against a passage expounding Ruth 3.15, in which Bernard claims that the last translation (the King James Version) is wrong to say that 'she' went into the city; it should be 'he', according to the Hebrew word and 'the Learned' in that language. He maintains that both of them went into the city (326). The relevant passage in Lavater's commentary occurs in his exposition of this verse. Lavater observes that Boaz went into the city, no doubt accompanying Ruth to

protect her (110r). It is significant that Bernard describes Lavater, together with Junius and Drusius as learned. This commendation contrasts with Bernard's dismissiveness of Topsell, whom he does not even name, as will be discussed below. These instances where Bernard explicitly acknowledges Lavater are not the only places where he follows him. There are also close unacknowledged resemblances between many passages in Bernard's commentary and passages in Lavater's commentary.<sup>47</sup> However, it is noticeable that Bernard does not always simply reproduce what Lavater has written. In one of the examples listed in the preceding footnote, he significantly develops Lavater's point. Expounding Ruth 2.14, Bernard observes:

This moderate feeding, and homely wholesome fare, which formerly men were content to feed upon, may reprove the daintinesse of servants, which nowadayes will hardly bee content with such fare in their Masters service, as when after comming to their owne hand, they would bee glad of the worst bit thereof (198)

Lavater's corresponding exhortation, in his exposition of the same verse, is addressed to servants, who should: 'be contented if they have necessarie thinges geven them, let them not complaine, nor wish for dainties. Workemen in the olde time were content with frugall and meane foode: neyther doest thou heare that they did accuse theyr maister.' (74v-75r) Lavater does not discuss this point further. Bernard, however, places this point at the end of an extended discussion in which he draws attention to the simple fare of Abraham and Sarah and the Prophets by contrast with the insistence of men in his own time on finely cooked food. Isaac provides a precedent for dainty eating, shown by his enjoyment of food prepared by Esau. The godly should be contented with plain food conformable with their hunger arising from their

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<sup>47</sup> Some examples of similar passages in the two commentaries are: RR 195-6 and Lavater 74r-74v; RR 198 and Lavater 74v-75r; RR 228-9 and Lavater 85v-86r; RR 276-7 and Lavater 99v; and RR 469 and Lavater 155v-156v.

labour. Bernard sets out arguments against delicate eating, including its causing disinclination to relieve the poor (RR 197-8).

Bernard does not acknowledge Topsell as a source, but there are many signs that he made use of his commentary.<sup>48</sup> However, Bernard, on occasion, goes further than developing Topsell's points, for he shows himself prepared to disagree with his views, and evidently expresses a low opinion of his explanation of a biblical occurrence. It seems evident that Bernard has Topsell in mind when he expresses his views on family limitation. In expounding Ruth 4.10, Bernard criticises people who marry without intending to have more than a few children at most (407-8). He is explicit when he returns to the subject in expounding Ruth 4.11, where he interprets the people and elders praying that Ruth should be like Leah as meaning that they prayed that she should have children. Here, he condemns those 'who use meanes and medicines to prevent children, or sin in the sinne of *Onan*, whom the Lord slew: for it is murther before the Lord <Gen. 38.9>' (419). He is opposing medical methods of contraception as well as Onan's practice related in Gen 38.9. People limit their families, he claims, so as not to have to maintain them (418). Topsell's views to which it would appear that Bernard is objecting are expressed most clearly in his exposition of Ruth 4.11. Like Bernard, Topsell interprets the prayer of the people and elders that Ruth be like Rachel and Leah to refer to her fruitfulness (Topsell 254-5). However, he subsequently claims that in his miserable time it is happier to be barren (257) since, in particular, children may meet with spiritual adversity (257-8). According to Topsell, the elders prayed for Ruth to be like Rachel

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<sup>48</sup> Two instances of similarities between Bernard's and Topsell's commentaries are: RR 36-7 and Topsell 27-8; and their discourses on apparel (RR 258-263 and Topsell 164-9), which overlap in places and are part of a wider debate on the subject.

and Leah because their progeny were faithful (260-1). He goes on to maintain that a single good child is better to its parents than thousands of evil ones. His arguments for family limitation include several from natural history, such as the following one: ‘we should not bee like the Jewes, desirous of many children, because our families shoulde grow great, but like the doves which bring forth few, which might be the children of innocency’ (261)

In his exposition of Ruth 2.10, Bernard also evidently expresses a low opinion of Topsell’s explanation of why Mordecai did not reverence Haman (Esth. 3.2). According to Bernard, the reasons alleged for this occurrence are ‘but weake conjectures’ (170). It seems certain that the reasons Bernard refers to are those put forward by Topsell: firstly, that Haman belonged to the wicked Amalekite nation which God commanded the Jews to destroy (see 1 Sam 15); and secondly (and more tentatively stated by Topsell), that the honour given to Haman was only proper for God (Topsell 114). Bernard agrees with Topsell that there will have been special reasons for Haman’s disrespect, as there were for Elisha’s not respecting Jehoram (see 2 Kings 3.13-14). But he opts not to conjecture what these special reasons were (RR 169-70).

There is some evidence that Bernard took into account the interpretations of Jewish scholars. In expounding Ruth 4.3, he cites Lev. 25.25 and observes that the Jewish interpreters on this place of Leviticus say that only a poor man may sell his inheritance; others may not sell to make money (359). Furthermore, on one occasion it appears that he may have drawn on a Jewish source concerning the Book of Ruth. In expounding Ruth 4.6, Bernard puts forward as an explanation of the nearer kinsman’s reason for not being able to redeem (that he might mar his own



inheritance): ‘he might have another wife (as upon this place some doe note) and so by taking this, the house might be filled with contention’ (381). He may have had the Targum in mind, for its expansion on Ruth 4.6 makes this explanation: ‘*Because I have a wife, I have no right to marry another in addition to her lest there be contention in my house and I destroy my inheritance.*’ (BTR 30) However, Bernard does not follow the convention of alluding to the Targum by such a name as the Chaldee Paraphrast. It is possible that he is referring to medieval Jewish commentators, for some of these translated by Beattie also provide this explanation. Thus, Salmon ben Yeroham, with reference to Ruth 4.6 (‘lest I destroy my inheritance’), relates, amongst other explanations, the view that: ‘he knew that his first wife would not like this and would say, “Divorce me, for I am not pleased with this rival whom you have taken on”, and he would be obliged to destroy his estate and they would come into great contentions and disputes’ (BJE 82). Abraham ibn Ezra reports the view that this lemma is an allusion to the nearer kinsman’s wife (BJE 143). Again, David Qimhi explains it: ‘By having in one house two women who are rivals to one another.’ (BJE 151). If Bernard is drawing on Jewish opinion here, as in his citing of Jewish Interpreters of Leviticus, he may be illustrating coincidence of Protestant and Jewish views reflecting their mutual hostility towards Roman Catholicism to which attention has been drawn by Walton and Walton.

Besides these actual and suggested influences, the structure and some of the content of Ruths Recompence derive from Bernard’s preaching theory. This theory was set out in The Faithfull Shepheard (1607) and significantly revised in 1621, and follows Andreas Gerhard Hyperius’s manual of preaching, first published in Latin in 1553 and translated into English by John Ludham in 1577, as The Practis of

preaching, otherwise called the Pathway to the Pulpit. Hyperius's influence has been noted in the writings of Christ's College men, particularly in William Perkins's The Arte of Propheying (Latin 1592; translated into English 1607). Bernard attended Christ's College when Perkins was a fellow. It is likely that Bernard would have been encouraged to make his own development of Hyperius's preaching theory by his familiarity with Perkins especially (Lares 48-9, 56, 77-8, 78-9, 79-80, 91-5). Bernard's application of his own theory to the commentary constitutes a notable contribution by him to the tradition of commentaries on the Book of Ruth. The title page of Ruths Recompence states that the matter was delivered in sermons, 'the briefe summe whereof' being now published. However, it is unlike the preceding early modern commentaries on the Book of Ruth by Lavater and Topsell, which consist of a series of sermons, each addressing usually several verses. Bernard rather deals individually with the verses constituting each of the four chapters of the Book of Ruth, working through the text phrase by phrase. However, his method is more uniform and systematic than that of his predecessors, for he writes with extreme discipline in fairly close accordance with the mode of sermon writing advocated in his preaching theory.

Bernard's main endeavour in The Faithfull Shepheard (1607, 1621) is to set out in detail a procedure, consciously logical (FS 25), for constructing a sermon. In the address to his brethren in the ministry and others in both editions, he claims that St. Paul demonstrates this procedure in 1 Corinthians 11 verses 23 to 34. It essentially consists of deriving doctrines from a biblical text. Each doctrine has a use which could then be applied to the congregation hearing the sermon. Bernard's use of the terms doctrine, use and application have specific meanings, which are manifested in

the different stages of biblical hermeneutics Bernard identifies in The Faithfull Shepheard.

The first stage is to resolve<sup>49</sup> the text. Initially, this involves establishing the author of the words (FS 20), the occasion of the words, the coherence with what precedes and with what follows (except in, for example, some of Proverbs), and the matter contained in the words. The preacher must also consider the scope of the words (that is, the main point the words make) and the principal proposition arising from the scope. Furthermore, any arguments used to prove the matter and proposition, and the method or manner of delivery are to be observed (FS, 1621 ed. 160-4). Ruths Recompence at the outset illustrates the first of these processes. Bernard, following the example of the earlier commentators on the Book of Ruth, Lavater (1v-2v) and Topsell (1-2), speculates about authorship, (which cannot be determined and is anyhow unimportant) (RR 2). But the scope and principal proposition of the sermon should be stated at the outset, and Ruths Recompence opens with an outline of the whole of the Book of Ruth. There is also an outline of each chapter at its beginning.

Resolving also involves division of the text into its constituent parts. This enables the hearer to follow the discourse better (FS 21). Bernard addresses the task of division of texts consisting of one or two verses. Some verses contain evident doctrines or propositions. There may be more than one proposition in a verse. The propositions constitute the parts (FS, 1621 ed. 164). If the text does not consist of evident proposition(s), it is necessary to consider what in general to call it or its components. For example, it may be called a narration, an exhortation, a

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<sup>49</sup> 'resolve': 'To analyse, examine (a statement).' (OEDQ).

commandment, praise, question, answer, or description. Then, the parts are to be gathered from the, for example, narration. The main method Bernard proposes for this is to gather the parts by circumstances as the words lie in order (FS 21).

Bernard's method may be inspected in his consideration of Ruth 1.2.

Verse 2. *And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sonnes, Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem Judah: and they came into the countrey of Moab, and continued there.* (14)

Bernard observes that this is a continuation of the narration of the journey. He observes: 'Into these three things this verse divideth it selfe, the declaration of their persons what they were called, both in respect of their names, and place whence they came; the perfecting of their journey, and their stay there.' (RR 14) That is, the parts are:

First, '*And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sonnes, Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem Judah*'

Secondly, '*and they came into the countrey of Moab*'

And thirdly, '*and continued there*'.

The detailed exposition of these parts, after the resolving of the text, is undertaken on short phrases of the text called lemmata. The Minister should begin this process by interpreting words if they are obscure. An explanation is to be made of the individual words or of words making a sentence. This is to be done in an orderly way, as the words or sentences in the parts of the division are encountered. By proceeding thus rather than explaining the words at once throughout the text, tediousness and tautologies are avoided. By contrast, if the words are plain, the

matter is to be enlarged (FS 26). In the 1621 edition of The Faithfull Shepheard, Bernard recommends consulting Hyperius regarding tackling obscurities in Scripture (177). The obscurities which Bernard has in mind arise from such factors as want of understanding of the original languages, errors in translation, and ignorance of history, philosophy, divinity and so on (FS 26-7). In Ruths Recompence, it would appear that the instance of the initial exposition of the lemma, '*In the Land*', from Ruth 1.1, serves to explain such an obscurity. Bernard states: 'In the Land of Canaan, the Kingdome of Israel, where God had placed them, planted them, and promised to them his blessings plentifully' (RR 8). Here, his explanation is drawn from elsewhere in the Bible (FS 29). In The Faithfull Shepheard Bernard draws particular attention to the need to reconcile places in the Scriptures which seem to disagree. He insists that there is no actual inconsistency in the Bible (FS 30). Any apparent inconsistency can be explained by taking all the conditions required for contradiction into account (FS 30-1, 35). It can be seen that in Ruths Recompence chapter 1, Bernard attempts to resolve an apparent inconsistency. This is between the ethos of the Book of Ruth, in which marriages between Jews and foreigners is related without comment, and the condemnation of intermarriage in other parts of the Bible. In expounding Ruth 1.4, he comments that Mahlon and Chilion were not permitted to marry women of Moab, as they did at this point in the narrative. He cites numerous biblical references to support this point (27-8). On the other hand, according to Bernard, it was permissible for Boaz to marry Ruth when she was a believer (28). He later claims that the deaths of Mahlon and Chilion were to punish them for persisting in their married lives in Moab (30). However, Bernard's apparent attempts to deny inconsistency are undermined by his recognition, following Topsell

(Topsell 23, 24) and contrary to his interpretation of wrongdoing, that the Moabites showed hospitality in allowing their women to marry Mahlon and Chilion (19-20, 28). Bernard is evidently so impressed with the ethos of the Book of Ruth that his exposition does not fully address the issue of biblical consistency, as his preaching theory prescribes.

In Bernard's preaching theory, interpretation is followed by a stage<sup>50</sup> which consists of deriving doctrines from the text, proving them and giving reasons. Doctrines are propositions informing the judgement of what is to be believed or done. The latter, practical doctrines pertain to one of ethics, economics, politics and ecclesiastics. Both kinds of doctrine are either plainly expressed in Scripture or can be collected out of Scripture where they are not so apparent (FS, 1621 ed. 206-9, 258). Ruths Recompence shows numerous instances of doctrines which are the result of collection as opposed to directly given. In the editions of The Faithfull Shepheard, Bernard gives ways of collecting doctrines (FS, 1621 ed. 222-52). These include making allegories and collecting lessons from similitudes (FS, 1621 ed. 243-52). Bernard's employment of allegories in Ruths Recompence does include one which is presented as a doctrine collected from the biblical text.<sup>51</sup>

According to Bernard's theory, it is always essential to show the ground or basis of the doctrine in scripture (FS, 1621 ed. 216-220). Thus, in Ruths Recompence, in the exposition of the single word lemma, 'Wives' in Ruth 1.4, the word 'wives' is first defined, and then the ground is stated: that Mahlon and Chilion

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<sup>50</sup> This stage is clarified in the 1621 edition of The Faithfull Shepheard.

<sup>51</sup> This instance is Bernard's noting, like Isidore of Seville (c.560-636), (MET 7) that '*the Kinsman the Redeemer was a type of Christ*' (RR 366). That Bernard presents this as a doctrine is indicated by certain of the desirable outcomes he goes on to state of Christ's redeeming people. These outcomes are various manifestations of good conduct, and correspond with Bernard's stage of exposition subsequent to deriving doctrine, of making uses of doctrines (RR 366).

chose to marry according to God's ordinance. The doctrine which follows is an illustration of the sort of doctrine informing the judgement of what is to be done: 'So men are to take women as wives, to live together in Gods holy ordinance' (RR 27). Sometimes, in Ruths Recompence, a single observation after the lemma serves to introduce the doctrine, as in the exposition of the next lemma in Ruth 1.4, '*Of the women of Moab*'. (RR 27).

According to Bernard's preaching theory, doctrines are to be followed by proofs and reasons which confirm them (FS, 1621 ed. 258). The proof shows that the matter of a doctrine is true (FS, 1621 ed. 258). In Ruths Recompence, doctrines are frequently proved from the concurrence of other places in the Bible. This can be as brief as the citing of biblical references. The reason or reasons show why it is so as the doctrine states (FS, 1621 ed. 265). Reasons generally draw on the Bible. They are meant to make the hearers understand the equity of doctrines so that they receive them more readily (FS, 1621 ed. 267). In Ruths Recompence, reasons are only sometimes given. Although Bernard consistently follows the structures of his preaching theory, he mainly disregards the aspects which, in a spoken discourse, would address the receptivity of the hearers.

Ruths Recompence is very much preoccupied with conduct, and the stages of exposition which come next allow for this subject to be fully addressed. The first of these stages is the making of uses of doctrines.<sup>52</sup> The use is 'a necessary conclusion drawne from a Doctrine' (FS, 1621 ed. 272). Developing Hyperius's account (Lares 79), Bernard declares that there are principally four kinds of uses of doctrines: the uses of confutation, instruction, reprehension and consolation, as found in 2 Tim.

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<sup>52</sup> Bernard amplifies his explanation of this in the 1621 edition of The Faithfull Shepheard.

3.16 and Rom. 15.4. These include exhortations and dehortations (FS, 1621 ed. 274).

Consistently with Bernard's warning in his preaching theory that controversy, in particular, is to be avoided (FS, 1621 ed. 283-8), confutation (of errors contrary to the doctrine) is barely used in Ruths Recompence (eg. 182). The use of consolation (encouragement of the godly, including those in despair) does occur (eg. RR 25, 32). However, more common in the commentary (eg. 5, 10-11, 20, 26-7) is the use of instruction (which is a practical conclusion from the doctrine to do some good thing). The use of reprehension (a reproof of sin) also occurs fairly often (eg. RR 4, 8, 13, 17, 27, 31).

The presentation of the uses in printed form not only involves a degree of brevity in the interests of readability but is also unsuitable for one particular part of Bernard's preaching theory. This part consists of techniques in exhortation and dehortation in uses for moving the affections of the hearers so as to act on the will. The preaching theory explains various techniques in its account of the use of instruction. (FS, 1621 ed. 299-305). These are also enjoined for the use of reprehension (FS, 1621 ed. 315). They include gesture – movements of the hand and eyes (FS, 1621 ed. 299). Furthermore, the Minister should strike fear and terror into the hearts of those in error when he is making a dehortation in the use of confutation (FS, 1621 ed. 278-9), and move the hearts of the hearers when making reasons for comfort in the use of consolation (FS, 1621 ed. 323). The moving of the affections is clearly a significant part of the theory, and the techniques advocated to achieve this are not possible in the printed medium. However, this goal of moving the affections pertains particularly to the improving of the morality of the hearers of sermons in a



specific locality where particular issues were important to the preacher. Although the commentary is concerned with issues of conduct, much of its discussion deals with society as a whole, rather than such parishioners whom a Minister knew well, and whose particular behaviour he meant to address.

The next stage of Bernard's preaching theory is the application of the use to the hearers.<sup>53</sup> Bernard defines application as:

a neerer bringing of the use delivered, after a more generall sort, in the third person, as spoken to persons absent; to the time, place, and persons then present: and uttered in the second person, or in the first, when the Minister, as often the Apostle doth, will enclude himselfe with them.  
(FS 70)

Application is an important part of Bernard's preaching theory. However, it requires the addressing of the parishioners whom the Minister knows with a view to improving them specifically. It is not possible to address the whole readership of a book in this way, and Ruths Recompence is therefore unsuited to this component of the theory. In any case, an emphasis on applying the lessons to particular individuals would detract from the fluency of the commentary and its engagement with so many issues in the exposition of quite a lengthy text.

The stage after application of a use is the prevention of objections, since members of the congregation will defend themselves from what the Minister has said to them.<sup>54</sup> Prevention of objections consists of propounding what might be said and the answer to this, or, alternatively, of answering an objection without mentioning it (FS 77). It might appear that there is no place for prevention of objections in the commentary since it does not engage in application. However, the device of prevention of objections is used in the commentary. It is employed for two of the

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<sup>53</sup> The chapter discussing application in The Faithfull Shepherd is not revised in substance in the 1621 edition.

<sup>54</sup> The chapter on prevention of objections is not revised in substance in the 1621 edition.

four occasions which Bernard's preaching theory declares to require prevention of objections. These are, firstly, when the text itself provides an objection, and, secondly, when a doctrine gathered or the minister's exposition give rise to an objection (FS 77-8; eg. RR 12-13, 13-14, 266-7, 267-9). Bernard's preaching theory considers how far the Minister should proceed in preventing objections. Matters differ in their degree of difficulty as do congregations in their learning and ability to make objections and distinguish between objections and answers. This should be taken into account, as should the time and place. Again, Bernard expresses the view that controversy is to be avoided; it is not suitable for a 'common auditorie' (FS 78-9). In preventing objections in Ruths Recompence, Bernard would have had his own rural congregations in mind. It was also important that the woman to whom the text was dedicated, the Countess of Warwick, should approve of his teaching.

The examples of preventions of objections given above occur in chapter 1 and chapter 3. The examples in chapter 1 both concern the justifiability of leaving Bethlehem Judah for the heathen country of Moab. The first objection arises from the ground of the doctrine collected out of the lemma in verse 1, '*In the Country of Moab*'. This ground conveys the harmfulness of Moab to Israel. The objection is: 'Question. *Whether did Elimelech well to goe from Bethlehem, into such an idolatrous country?*' (RR 11-12) This issue also occurs in Lavater's and Topsell's commentaries on Ruth. Lavater considers the arguments condemning and the arguments defending Elimelech's action but, because of lack of information, does not side with either (7v-8r, 10v-12v, 14v). Topsell notes that the family's settling amongst the Moabites shows that it is lawful for the godly in need to ask for help from the ungodly provided that they do not acquire their superstitions; he also draws

attention to the wrongness of going to the ungodly when the godly could provide ease (17-18). Bernard, in answering the objection, condemns Elimelech's action (RR 12-13), and takes a more definite stance than his predecessors. Bernard returns to the issue when he answers a further objection which arises from a use of reprehension in the exposition of the next lemma. This use states that the doctrine, that wives and children should accompany their husbands and parents in adversity, according to the bond of law, checks contrary conduct, provided that the command to be followed and obeyed is lawful. The objection is: 'If *Elimelech*, as it may seeme, did not well to goe, it may be questioned whether these did well to follow him?' Bernard answers that they might not do wrong provided that Elimelech did not lead them into evil and idolatry. He concludes by expressing his disinclination to engage in contention: 'If any thinke otherwise either of *Elimelechs* going, or of his company, I contend not.' (RR 13-14) Here, Bernard develops Lavater's mention of wives following their husbands (15r). Bernard indicates that women and children should disobey the male head of the household if he directs them to do evil.<sup>55</sup> This constitutes an exception to patriarchal authority, as, it will be argued in section 6, is allowed implicitly by the early modern commentators regarding some of the conduct of the women in Ruth chapter 1 especially.

The instances of preventions of objections in chapter 3 given above constitute a large part of Bernard's assessment of Naomi's plan, and their substance is discussed in section 6.3 of this Introduction. On the first of these occasions, the text itself provides the objection. The lemma expounded, in verse 4, follows Naomi's

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<sup>55</sup> Bernard's position is representative of other writers of his time. For example, William Gouge, in Of Domesticall Duties (1622), includes a section on 'Of limiting all dutie to man, within the compasse of the feare of God' (13-16).

instruction to Ruth to uncover Boaz's feet when he has lain down alone at night and runs as follows: '*And lay thee downe, and he shall tell thee what thou shalt doe.*'] Bernard initially develops the doctrine that '*good counsell may be looked for of those that bee truly religious, and wise withall*'. However, he soon stalls, making the objection: 'But here it may bee demanded, *Whether Naomi did well to advise Ruth to use this meanes, to trie Boaz his minde?*'. His answer is immediately in the negative: 'The manner seemeth not to bee good nor approoveable, and my reasons be these' (RR 266). The reasons sum up the analyses of preceding commentators on the Book of Ruth (RR 266-7). Bernard goes on to derive a doctrine, '*matters ill begun, the Lord both can and will turne unto good*', which leads to a use of reprehension, which declares that the example of Ruth is not imitable. The second objection derivies from this use. It is: '*If it be not imitable, will some say, why is it recorded?*' (RR 267). In answer to this objection, Bernard sets out a classification of the actions of the godly. He calls on his readers to examine the various actions and ascertain how lawful and expedient they are for them (267-9). This is a very full answer to the objection, and shows how concerned Bernard was with the issue of the conduct of Naomi and Ruth, and how this concern could be accommodated in his preaching structure.

Bernard's preaching theory specifies the nature of the conclusion of a sermon.<sup>56</sup> It should contain a short repetition of the principal doctrines and uses in the sermon (which may alternatively be put at the beginning of the next sermon if the same preacher is giving it) (FS 80). Also, the Minister should make a forcible exhortation to move affection and aid understanding. He should pick out one special

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<sup>56</sup> The 1607 and 1621 editions of The Faithfull Shepheard essentially do not differ in the chapter concerning the conclusion.

doctrine and use, which has not earlier been dwelt on, and exhort the hearers concerning it, so that it will be freshest in the memory. The Minister should end suddenly, leaving his hearers moved and longing for more (FS 80-1). In Ruths Recompence, there is a short conclusion at the end of chapter 4, the last chapter, in which Bernard treats two doctrines, ‘*from a meane estate, some can arise to great honour*’ (477-8) and ‘*That great is the reward of Religion*’ (478).

It is evident that Bernard systematically applies his preaching theory, as explained in the successive editions of The Faithfull Shepheard, in composing Ruths Recompence. He clearly finds the theory particularly useful for providing a framework for addressing many issues in the society of his time, and feels free to abbreviate some stages in the exposition according to the requirements of a printed medium.

Although Bernard draws on his predecessors’ work (besides a wide range of authors on various subjects whom he uses to illustrate aspects of his discussion), his commentary is more elaborate and structured than theirs. Having drawn attention to the tradition of biblical commentaries on Ruth, we may turn our attention to how the early modern commentaries, in particular, addressed the issue which has been identified, of the conduct of the women in Ruth.

## 5. CONTEMPORARY MODELS OF EXEMPLARY WOMEN

While Jewish and medieval Christian expositions of the Book of Ruth concerned themselves with it simply as a part of the divinely appointed revelation

embodied in the scriptures, for conscientious pastors in the reformed church of early modern Europe the book took on a particular importance. The inferior status of women was at that time a generally unchallenged assumption, and the clergy felt it was their duty to reinforce this assumption by appeals to authority, including the authority of the Bible. In some respects the Bible was unhelpful in this respect. Women in the Hebrew Scriptures, such as Jael and Judith, behaved in exceptional ways, altogether unsuitable for imitation by 'the weaker sex'. Furthermore, their situations were far from the domesticity advocated for women in the early modern period. Women in the New Testament have a role in the ministry of Jesus and in the early church but they are not the subjects of stories depicting their lives. Naomi and Ruth, however, being central to the everyday narrative of Ruth, could be analysed in depth as pious examples with whom the early modern English woman could identify and whom they could be encouraged to imitate. It will be seen, however, that, despite their status as biblically approved women, throughout the story the female characters' behaviour offered some challenges to the commentators' views as to how women should ideally act. In addressing the question of ideal behaviour in women, the commentators' views were shaped by the models of conduct current in their society, including, besides the prevailing subservient one, others such as a courtly model and some which incorporated a measure of womanly assertiveness. These models have been analysed in detail in recent research, perhaps most comprehensively by Ian Maclean and Linda Woodbridge.

Maclean has demonstrated the theoretical bases of women's prescribed roles in theology; medicine; ethics, politics and social writings and law. In theology, the malediction of Eve resulted in women being subjected to their husbands, and in their

being excluded from state and public affairs (Maclean 18-19). Women were associated with some virtues: 'longsuffering, humility, patience, compassion and public charity are of this order' (Maclean 20). Maclean adds devoutness. He draws attention to medical beliefs being used to support views in ethics, politics and law about women's roles (46). In particular, woman's 'assumed frailty of body, which best befits her for the care of the young and makes her unsuited to exposure to the dangers of the outside world, is accompanied by mental and emotional weaknesses which are the natural justification for her exclusion from public life, responsibility and moral fulfilment.' (43-4)

Maclean's more detailed discussions of women's roles in relation to whether virtue differs between the sexes and in relation to the household constitute a precedent for subsequent interpretations by critics of conduct book models for women. Regarding the first of these discussions, he mentions Baldassare Castiglione, for example, as asserting in The Courtier (1528) that women have equal virtue but upholding social conventions which not only stipulate deference to women but also their subjection in marital and legal terms. Erasmus, Agrippa, and Vives, on the other hand, are represented as holding that men and women have different capacities for virtue. They oppose change in women's social status (Maclean 55-6). With respect to the household, Maclean points out woman's custodial role, frequently explained in terms of her physical and mental characteristics. Her confinement to the home means that she does not give rise to concupiscence. This will be seen to be an issue for the Ruth commentators in their discussion of chapter 2. Even heroic women's deeds are used to reinforce the domestic ideal (Maclean 57-8). Maclean asserts that Judaeo-Christian teaching about the household duties of women

is consistent with the views expressed in the spurious third book of Aristotle's Economics and those set out by Plutarch in Conjugalia praecepta (Maclean 58-9). He cites Juan Luis Vives's De institutione foeminae Christianae (1523) as an instance, in portraying '[t]he chaste, modest, silent, submissive, hard-working, soberly dressed, pious and longsuffering wife' (59). This is the tradition which the Ruth commentators belonged to, and, as Maclean notes, it was anchored in the belief that woman was weak and liable to sin (59). He points out that the wife had power in household administration despite the requirement that she should comply with her husband's wishes (59). As for her reading, such writers as Agrippa, Vives and Erasmus restricted women to edifying matters (Maclean 65). Political issues relating to women as rulers raise complications regarding women's qualities which Maclean addresses, but which would hardly seem relevant to the majority of women readers of the Ruth commentaries (61-3). Another anomaly which such readers would generally not be familiar with, was the court lady, who was expected to make a public show in luxurious surroundings of her learning and conversational skills (Maclean 64).

Maclean asserts that jurists viewed woman conformably with the Bible<sup>57</sup> and moralistic writings. She should occupy herself suitably in the home, and she is under the authority of her husband (Maclean 76). She is held to avoid public appearance on account of nature's imposition on her of the '(quasi-) virtue of *verecundia* or shame' (Maclean 78). Furthermore, arguments from nature (women's mental and physical inferiority) and social institutions and customs were invoked to exclude

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<sup>57</sup> Maclean seems to imply that the Bible enjoined a universally restricted set of roles on women. However, parts of the Bible, notably the Book of Ruth, authorised liberated behaviour in women. See also Suzanne Trill's argument along these lines (Trill 30-50, especially p. 41). But Maclean evidently does not take the liberating power of the Bible into account because he is concerned with scholarly texts, in this instance with texts by jurists, whose interpretation he reflects.



women from various legal activities such as being witnesses, and were amongst the justifications for disqualifying women from holding public office despite precedents for this practice (Maclean 77-8).

Maclean makes a few further observations relating to models of the ideal woman in his conclusion. With respect to commonplace books he comments that 'even where sections are devoted to heroic or otherwise notable women, the wider context suggests that such examples are exceptions to the rule' (84). He also draws attention to factors in society which relate to models of ideal womanhood. The Renaissance courtesy books prescribed the behaviour of a newly emerged social group of women between the court and salon level and the level of artisans and peasants. It may be concluded from Maclean's observation that the characteristics of these women must have influenced the model of womanhood expounded. He draws attention to Roman Catholic women who used their religious activities as an outlet, and also points out that widows' administration of the estates of their husbands and women's engagement in commercial activities were conducive to a change in attitudes (88).

One sphere of writing in the Renaissance which particularly engaged with women's conduct was the succession of literary attacks on, and defences of, women. Linda Woodbridge categorises certain of these publications as the formal controversy about women (13-14). She concludes from her consideration of this controversy that: 'If the formal controversy had any purpose at all beyond literary delight, then the purpose of attacks and defenses was likely the same – to enforce a certain mode of behavior.' (134) She characterises this mode of behaviour: women were to be kept 'housebound, nurturing, chaste, modest, and silent' (135). This corresponds to

Maclean's category of the view of women found in Judaeo-Christian teaching, to which the Ruth commentators adhered. In the course of her discussion of the formal controversy, Woodbridge too shows that variations of this central model of the ideal woman were presupposed and propounded. In the case of Sir Thomas Elyot's The Defence of Good Women (1540), having noted that Elyot was influenced by Vives, amongst whose works was a conduct book, she notes that his 'stereotype of a "good" woman suggests that modesty, piety, and homekeeping are the essence of decent womanhood [. . .] and he insists on the subservience of wives' (18). However, she observes that the last part of the treatise, which features the widowed queen, Zenobia, 'is noteworthy as one of the few Renaissance texts to view with approval the independence, assertiveness, and erudition of a widow – widows being perhaps the most heavily satirized class of women in Renaissance literature.' (20) This model of the widow is consistent with the conduct of Naomi and Ruth.

Woodbridge sees Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim as challenging women's assigned roles in his contribution to the formal controversy, translated into English in 1542 with the title, A Treatise of the Nobilitie and excellencye of woman kynde. He points out that women have not at all times and everywhere been socially and politically inferior as they are in contemporary Europe. He attributes their condition (of subjection) here to cultural, more than natural, forces, notably their exclusion from education and legal rights (Woodbridge 42-3).

Woodbridge observes that Book III of Castiglione's The Courtier (published in English in 1561) 'is wholly devoted to limning the ideal female courtier' (54). She draws attention to the women's defender Lord Julian de Medici as the chief architect of this process (54). He asserts that the court lady should share certain virtues with

the Courtier: ‘wisdom, nobleness of courage, constancy’ (Woodbridge 55). Woodbridge comments on the uniqueness of this ideal: ‘Few writers of the period conceded these particular virtues to women.’ (55) De Medici also concedes that women may perform nearly all activities provided they show mildness. Furthermore, they should show cultivated accomplishments (Woodbridge 55-6). Woodbridge points out that de Medici coincides with Agrippa in concluding that men have exercised rule over women by their own tyrannical authority (57). She here implies that Castiglione also challenges women’s assigned roles. Commenting further on the conduct depicted in The Courtier, she alludes to ‘[t]he ideal of ladylike behavior’ exhibited by the women characters (58).

Woodbridge traces the delineation of the ideal of good womanhood in the tradition to which the Ruth commentators belonged in several other treatises in the formal controversy.<sup>58</sup> However, she also draws attention to the different ideal expressed by Daniel Tuvil, writing in 1616.<sup>59</sup> Although she portrays Tuvil as a minor thinker and a retailer of antifeminist charges, she draws attention to his promoting in women virtues such as learning, wisdom and courage, which were traditionally regarded as masculine (104, 105). He even allows that a woman more educated than her husband may guide the household. Moreover, following Agrippa, he ‘attacks the ideal of domesticity’ (Woodbridge 106). He also draws on Plato, stating that men and women have the same ability to perform civil and military

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<sup>58</sup> For example, Edmund Tilney’s A brief and pleasant discourse of duties in Mariage, called the Flower of Friendship (1568) (Woodbridge 59-60); Barnabe Rich’s The Excellencie of good women (1613) (Woodbridge 76-77).

<sup>59</sup> Daniel Tuvil, Asylum Veneris; or, A Sanctuary for Ladies. Justly Protecting Them, their virtues and sufficiencies from the foule aspersions and forged imputations of traducing Spirits, 1616. Woodbridge maintains that Tuvil was not making a direct response to Joseph Swetnam’s The Araignment of Lewde, idle, froward, and unconstant women: Or the vanitie of them, choose you whether (1615).

functions and any difference results from custom. Consistently with Plato, he sees a role for women in government (Woodbridge 107-8).

One particularly interesting episode in the debate about women is the deliberately provocative pamphlet by Joseph Swetnam and the responses to it. His title expresses the tone of his attack: The Araignment of Lewde, idle, froward, and unconstant women: Or the vanitie of them, choose you whether (1615).<sup>60</sup> Swetnam gives the impression that most women are bad. Thus, 'if she be honest and chaste then commonly she is jeallous' (Swetnam 7). He is critical of women's spending and avarice but he also attributes to them many other faults: 'they are ungratefull, perjured, full of fraud, flouting and deceit, unconstant, waspish, toyish, light, sullen, proude, discourteous and cruell' (16). The pamphlet ends after a diatribe against widows, which is full of anecdotes and illustrates values the commentators would have been familiar with when considering the godly widows in their commentaries on Ruth.

Of the three responses which appeared in 1617, that of the young<sup>61</sup> woman, Rachel Speght, was the first. Later responses were under the pseudonyms Ester Sowernam and Constantia Munda. Speght's pamphlet, A Mouzell for Melastomus, The Cynicall Bayter of, and foule mouthed Barker against Evahs Sex, is not pseudonymous or anonymous, and she was in fact the first Englishwoman to name herself as the writer of criticism of gender ideology (Lewalski, ODNB). The scale of her achievement is evident by the authority of her work, as recognised by recent scholarly criticism. Moreover, she had the last word in the Swetnam debate, for she

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<sup>60</sup> Swetnam published the first, that is, the 1615 edition under the pseudonym Thomas Tel-troth, but within a year a reprint, the first of many of this popular work, was published under his real name (van Heertum, ODNB).

<sup>61</sup> By her own admission, even on the first page of her pamphlet, sig. A3r.

alludes to it in the dedicatory epistle to her poems, Mortalities Memorandum, with a Dreame Prefixed (1621), and in this poetry itself.

Although Speght repeatedly refers to her youthfulness in the introductory material in A Mouzell for Melastomus (see also sig. B2r, for example), Sowernam's judgement that the work is consequently slender (sig. A2v) is clearly wrong. The modern critic, Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, draws attention to Speght's tactics by which she re-interprets scripture in such a way as to 'make the dominant discourse – Protestant biblical exegesis – yield a more expansive and equitable concept of gender' (Lewalski, Polemics and Poems xxi).

In the dedicatory epistle and in the preface, Speght makes a class attack on Swetman and the audience most susceptible to his influence. She describes this audience in the dedicatory epistle as 'the vulgar ignorant' (sig. A3v), and claims in the preface that they, having no more learning than Swetnam himself, will probably applaud him regardless of his 'hodge-podge' of heathen illustrations (sig. B2v). In making this attack, Speght indicates that she is speaking as a woman of higher rank. In fact, she was the daughter of a Calvinist minister in London (Lewalski, ODNB). In the dedicatory epistle, she supplements her mentioning of her youthfulness with reference to her lack of learning (sig. A4v) – a claim belied by her use of Latin. The acrostic poem spelling Joseph Swetnam, which follows the dedicatory epistle, repeats Speght's association of Swetnam with an ignorant audience: 'Seducer of the vulgar sort of men' (sig. B1r). Moving on to the preface, addressed to Swetman, her tone is that of a scornful woman, quite scathing. For instance, she writes of Swetnam's 'idle corrupt braine' (sig. B1v). Again, emphasising her learning, she criticises his irregularities in concordance and his disordered method (sig. B1v- sig.

B2r), and goes on to mimic his use of proverbs: ‘But the emptiest Barrell makes the lowest sound; and so we wil account of you’ (sig. B2r). Speght’s subsequent accusing Swetnam of blasphemy in perverting the sense of scripture is an instance of her setting a precedent for the Swetnam debate. Swetnam also conflicts with Christianity by disparaging woman, God’s creation (sig. B2r-sig. B2v). Speght finally adopts a high moral tone when she introduces a warning to which she returns in the last part of the pamphlet – that Swetnam is deserving of divine punishment (sig. B3v; ‘Certaine Quaeres’ 34). Three poems following the preface emphasise aspects of Speght’s persona – her comparability with David felling Goliath, and with a soldier; and her age, learning, piety, and magnanimity (sig. B4r-sig. B4v).

According to Lewalski’s interpretation, the main body of A Mouzell for Melastomus essentially does not engage directly with Swetnam but makes a critique of gender ideology. Speght examines biblical texts so as to counter those commentators who interpret scripture in such a way as to devalue and subjugate women (Lewalski, Polemics and Poems xxii). Lewalski sees Speght as denying that patriarchy has an essential basis ‘in nature or in the spiritual order’. However, she recognises that Speght ‘does not attack patriarchy as a social arrangement’ (Lewalski, Polemics and Poems xxxi). Diane Purkiss, in her analysis in ‘Material Girls’, illuminates this recognition. She draws attention to the different approach to ‘the hierarchies of religion and discourse’ taken by Speght from that of Swetnam and the two other respondents, Munda and Sovernam. Whereas they subject them to ‘carnavalesque laughter’, Speght defends them (in Mortalities Memorandum as well as A Mouzell for Melastomus) (Purkiss 92). While Lewalski has revised the view that Speght simply defends patriarchal discourse, it is evident that Speght does not

mock it. Purkiss furthermore explains Speght's motivation for upholding patriarchy: her father, as a clergyman, perpetrated patriarchal discourse, so she would have felt compelled to defend it. Doing so also meant that she evaded being perceived to be unruly according to Swetnam's interpretation (Purkiss 93). Purkiss sees Speght as negotiating a position to express and defend herself from inside patriarchal discourse, which gives her authority to attack Swetnam, who disrupts this discourse (Purkiss 93). Speght is 'speaking for women by speaking from precisely the place assigned to them' (Purkiss 94). Her approach, Purkiss points out, is the obverse of the replies to Swetnam which 'voice from a place proscribed by authority and always open to censure' (Purkiss 94).

A consideration of the main body of A Mouzell for Melastomus will serve to show the extent of Speght's discussion and to illustrate her engagement with patriarchal discourse in particular. This is especially striking in her discussion of Genesis, an important theme in the defences published under female names, as Barbara McManus emphasises in 'Eve's Dowry'. The main body begins with God's creation of woman as a helpmeet for man, and the conclusion from God's finding his creation good (Gen. 1.31) that woman was included in this (Speght, Mouzell 1-3). Speght does not adopt the rhetorical position that woman is superior to man, but claims that she is the most excellent creature except for man (Mouzell 3). She goes on to answer possible objections, in the first place centring on the Fall, as will be outlined here. Speght argues persistently that Adam can be construed to have been more at fault than Eve in that he was the stronger vessel, and should have been more able to resist temptation (Mouzell 4-5). It was only after Adam's transgression that the consequences of their sin became apparent (Speght, Mouzell 5-6). Accordingly,

when Speght acknowledges St. Augustine's view that Eve sinned not only against God and herself but also her husband, she points out that Eve had no malicious intent towards Adam (Mouzell 6), and that, to appease Adam, God promised that the Saviour from sin would be born of a woman. Speght makes the point that accordingly he was the Saviour of believing women as well as men 'that so the blame of sinne may not be imputed to his creature, which is good; but to the will by which *Eve* sinned' (Mouzell 6-7). This is a rebuttal of misogyny, in particular, Swetnam's (Swetnam 1), although Speght's not mentioning Swetnam here suggests that she wishes to address those who might be misled by Swetnam or others rather than Swetnam himself. In this passage, Speght ingeniously finds every opportunity to minimise Eve's culpability for the Fall and to deny that women's nature has been blemished by it.

In considering woman's creation, Speght points out that woman was not produced from Adam's foot or head to be his inferior or superior, 'but from his side, neare his heart, to be his equall' (Mouzell 10). McManus remarks that this was a commonplace, but Speght also draws attention to Gen. 1.26, where God gives man and woman equal authority over the rest of creation (Mouzell 10). This is an explicit statement of sexual equality, drawn from the biblical account of creation, which corrects patriarchal interpretations of this account. Speght concludes that, like Adam, men should regard their wives as their own flesh and bone (Gen. 2.23). Again, Speght will have Swetnam in mind when she declares that man never hated his own flesh, as the woman is, unless he was a monster (Mouzell 10). She will also have been thinking of Swetnam's explanation of woman being made to be a helper to man when she comments on this end of woman's creation. However, rather than



criticising Swetnam, she makes a genuinely feminist point: if woman is to be only a helper, husbands are to be blamed if they saddle their wives with complete responsibility for domestic affairs. '[T]he Husband being the stronger vessell is to beare a greater burthen then his wife' (Mouzell 12). Again, husbands ought not to regard their wives as vassals. However, they should mildly correct them if they go wrong (Mouzell 15) (perhaps an allusion to Adam's failure).

Having again stressed that Christ provided salvation for women as well as men, Speght proceeds to explain the sense in which the man is the woman's head (1 Cor. 11.3). She begins with the feminist point that this title does not authorise the man to domineer or treat his wife as a servant. Rather, this title with its various connotations, teaches him his duties to his wife: protection, benignity and affection, love and religious carriage, honour towards her as the weaker vessel, and religious instruction (Speght, Mouzell 16-17). These duties are similar to those Bernard enumerates in his own explanation of the man being head in his exposition of Ruth 3.9 (RR 281). Thus, it would appear that Speght does not conflict with patriarchal doctrine, but emphasises, as a feminist, male conduct which she regards as unacceptable. This conclusion is supported by Speght's subsequent lesson that men should not expect women to perform unlawful commands 'for if a wife fulfill the evill command of her husband, shee obeies him as a tempter' (17-18).

Speght ends the main body of the pamphlet by emphasising that her argument is not rhetorical: she does not claim that all women are virtuous, and so that women are more excellent than men. Even the Virgin Mary was a sinner, and the Bible speaks of both godly and ungodly women. Speght censures the condemnation of good women along with the bad, mentioning Swetnam. This also applies to men.

She states that in this book she has written of the good sort of women. (18-19). This underlines her argument that there are good women, and that she is genuine and realistic in her praise of them. The main body is rounded off by an epilogue condemning ingratitude, specifically, the ingratitude those men show to God who frame ‘opprobrious speeches’ and ‘disgracefull invectives’ against woman, who was created by God for the comfort of man (sig. E2v). Speght doubts whether these men should be termed men, and expects that God will avenge this sin. She unequivocally declares that God has made women equal in dignity with men (sig. E3r). This epilogue indicates that the main body of Speght’s epistle is concerned with gender equality, but also that in it she has Swetnam in mind.

The last part of the tract, ‘Certaine Quaeres to the bayter of Women. With Confutation of some part of his Diabolicall Discipline’, has its own title page. In the address to the reader, Speght represents her response as an unmethodical answer to an unmethodical pamphlet. However, she claims skill in producing it (sig. F1r-sig. F1v). This skill is recognised in the present account. Speght’s pamphlet is a carefully composed piece which dissuades at various levels from detraction of women. Speght goes on in the address to the reader to justify the scope of her answering to Swetnam. His tract contains so many absurdities that it would be futile to endeavour to answer them all. However, to show Swetnam that she can identify instances, she has brought to his attention the ones which follow (in the body of ‘Certaine Quaeres’) (sig. F1v). Speght concludes the introductory material with a preface. In it she accuses Swetnam of breaking the third commandment, the first part of his pamphlet being a perversion of scripture (sig. F2r). The remainder is no better, containing, most notably, blasphemies (sig. F2r-sig. F2v). Speght goes on to invite a

response from Swetnam to her queries (sig. F2v). As a genuine woman respondent to Swetnam, she evidently sees herself as opening a debate with him, rather than as silencing him.

In 'Certaine Quaeres', Speght addresses Swetnam scornfully, for example punning on 'as' by spelling it 'asse' (eg. p. 29). She also gives an example of Swetnam's bad grammar, in which he joins 'women' plural and 'she' singular (Swetnam 11; Speght, 'Certaine Quaeres' 31). Furthermore, she draws attention to Swetnam's contradicting himself ('Certaine Quaeres' 35-6), perhaps not recognising his speaking tongue-in-cheek. She draws most of her counterarguments to those claims of Swetnam which she mentions from the Bible. This culminates in her charging him with blasphemy. For instance, Speght opens 'Certaine Quaeres' by countering Swetnam's argument that a woman will not give thanks for a good turn (Swetnam 2) with the examples of Deborah and Hannah who sang hymns of thanksgiving to the Lord (Speght, 'Certaine Quaeres' 29). On further occasions, she corrects Swetnam's reading of the Bible. For example, according to Swetnam, as she states, David purchased the displeasure of his God for the love of women (Swetnam 10). Speght has never found this substantiated in scripture; rather David sinned because of his lust for Bathsheba ('Certaine Quaeres' 30-1). Swetnam, Speght more forcefully points out, is blasphemous in saying that women have sprung from the devil (Swetnam 15; Speght, 'Certaine Quaeres' 31); that he later maintains that they were created by God and formed by nature is an instance of his inconsistency (Swetnam 16; Speght, 'Certaine Quaeres' 31). The charge of blasphemy is still more forceful in Speght's treatment of Swetnam's claim that if God had not meant women only to plague men, he would never have called them necessary evils (Swetnam 31).

But, she points out, nowhere in the Bible does God call women necessary evils. Swetnam, in claiming this, ‘fastens a lie upon God’ (Speght, ‘Certaine Quaeres’ 33-4). To do so is blasphemy (Speght, ‘Certaine Quaeres’ 33), and whoever blasphemes God ought, by divine law, to die (Lev. 24. 14, 16). Therefore, Swetnam ought to die (Speght, ‘Certaine Quaeres’ 34). This is a theme taken up by Munda (Munda 33-5).

In concluding, Speght draws attention to the fact that she has not commented on Swetnam’s bearbaiting of widows (Swetnam 59-64). She has not done so because she is ‘ignorant of their dispositions’ (‘Certaine Quaeres’ 37). This explanation underlines the fact that Speght does claim to speak with authority on the matters she has engaged with. Speght’s omission to address Swetnam’s piece on widows leaves this task for Sowernam to perform.

Modern critics have found in Speght’s persona in Mouzell interesting variations on the early modern stereotype of how a good woman should behave. Woodbridge sees Speght in the preface addressed to Swetnam as ‘a fearless, militant woman’ (87), who shows herself to be ‘a cool, logical analyst’ in her rejection of Swetnam’s warning not to object to his work (88). Speght has a condescending tone. She is a ‘controlled, responsible intellectual’. However, ‘she is unwilling to be ladylike; her combat images show that her quiet militancy is still militancy’ (Woodbridge 89). Woodbridge comments that in ‘Certaine Quaeres’, Speght is ‘the hard-nosed literary critic cum censorious grammarian’ (Woodbridge 91). These images do not conform to the subservient stereotype – according to Woodbridge, it would seem, the actual woman who published represents herself in print in a persona which might encourage her voice to be heard. Turning now to Jones, she does identify Speght’s persona with the ideal of the tradition of the Ruth commentators:

‘Where Swetnam is rowdy, Speght is demure; where he is popular, she is learned; where he is helter-skelter, she makes a virtue of orderly deliberation. Her persona is that of the ideal Protestant maiden, meek and mild’. However, Jones recognises, Speght ‘takes the strongest possible line in that context’ (‘Counterattacks’ 49). Jones sees Speght as enacting the qualities which Swetnam claims women to lack. She points out that Speght’s virgin status, piety and humility are brought out in the introductory material. However, Speght’s persona is less simple than this introductory material would suggest; it is characterised by rational deliberation. Her pamphlet demonstrates ‘interpretive precision and Christian tolerance’ (A. Jones, ‘Counterattacks’ 51). It was a ‘pious, maidenly, and intelligent correction of an irreligious vulgarian’ (A. Jones, ‘Counterattacks’ 52). Jones is followed by Lewalski in recognising Speght’s derivation of a liberal marriage theory from the Bible. On these grounds she approves the comparison of her with David, and description of her as a faithful friend to her sex, in one of the poems following the preface (‘Counterattacks’ 52-3). Moving on to Purkiss’s reference to Speght’s persona, her emphasis is on Speght’s underwriting of authoritative social norms. She observes that consequently Speght ‘repeatedly places herself as subordinate, figuring herself as the obedient and educable wife of a husband-teacher who will enlighten her frequently mentioned ignorance’ (94).

Lewalski and McManus also comment on Speght’s persona. Speght, Lewalski declares, throughout answers Swetman by presenting a persona who shows his charges against women to be wrong. Lewalski enumerates the qualities of this persona. Speght presents herself as religious, learned, serious, truthful, eminently rational, engagingly modest, unassuming, justifiably angry yet self-controlled, and

courageous' (Lewalski, Polemics xxii). Lewalski draws attention in particular to Speght's portrayal of her persona as modest about her considerable learning. However, this learning, acquired in snatched hours of study, demonstrates women's 'equal intelligence and equal capacity for education' (xxii-xxiii). This persona, Lewalski observes, is posed against the monstrous character of Swetnam which Speght derives from his pamphlet. They encounter each other in unequal combat, like that between David and Goliath, and she is fearless (xxiii), as is represented in the poems following the preface (xxvi). Finally, McManus sees Speght's persona as anomalous. In so far as she represents herself as a chivalrous defender of women and discusses them in the third person, her speaking position has been constructed by male discourse. According to McManus, the three pseudonymous poems with male voices which justify Speght's writing smooth over the anomaly (McManus 198).

Speght had the last word in the Swetnam debate for she mentions her own role in responding to Swetnam and also alludes to the other respondents in her Mortalities Memorandum, with a Dreame Prefixed, imaginarie in manner; reall in matter (1621). In the dedicatory epistle to her godmother she represents herself as having been a 'forward' writer who has been censured by critical readers for her '*mouzeling Melastomus*'. Here, as Purkiss points out, she is apologising for 'intervening in a controversy governed by the marketplace' (Purkiss 91). Speght asserts her authorship of the pamphlet against those who have credited it to her father. This is a revealing complaint. Evidently, Speght's Mouzell is so impressive that certain people believed that it could not have been written by a woman. It should be noted, however, that for seventeenth-century people to believe in women authors at all

required a major adjustment (Purkiss 94). Censure, Speght goes on to observe, always occurs after a public act is performed (Mortalities sig. A2v).

The later pamphlets, Ester hath hang'd Haman by Ester Sovernam and The Worming of a mad Dogge: or, A Soppe for Cerberus the Jaylor of Hell by Constantia Munda have also been seen by modern critics – Woodbridge, Jones, Purkiss, Lewalski and McManus – as creating personas that illustrate contemporary models of women's conduct. However, it will be argued that the writers of these pamphlets could well have been men. Jones suggests that the writer using the pseudonym Munda was a man, on the grounds that the pamphlet is more concerned to attack writing by the unlearned, like Swetnam, than to make a sound defence of women (58). Purkiss notes Jones's suggestion and that of Simon Shepherd, which she sees as comparable, that the replies were orchestrated by printers and the authors may have been men disguised by pseudonyms (Purkiss 90). Although Purkiss rejects the view that if writers show commercial concerns they cannot be women (90), she does not claim that the woman-debate texts demonstrate female agency (95). It will be argued below that there are a number of other indications that both Sovernam and Munda may have been the pseudonyms of male writers. Perhaps Shepherd's suggestion is accurate. At least, it might have been the case that the remarkable apparition in Rachel Speght of a female champion of her sex could have appealed to the contemporary literary appetite for paradoxes, and inspired two men to construct their own versions of a reply to a misogynistic pamphlet.

One occasion which may betray that Sovernam is a man's pseudonym occurs when she appears to mock any wishes by women for greater freedom by commenting on wifely obedience that 'nothing is more acceptable before God then to obey' (9).

Likewise, the mention of the sexual double standard, when the woman only is punished for pregnancy outside marriage (Sowernam 24), may be male mockery. Sowernam's countering of Swetnam's misogyny, for instance, by representing men as instruments of the devil tempting women (25-6), similarly constitutes rhetoric which may not actually be meant to be in the interests of women. This doubt is reinforced by her claim that women, if they fall, are extremely mischievous (25). Again, Sowernam's urging of drunkards and dissipated men to remove their wives' discontent (44) may reflect disapproval of vices in men rather than a concern with women's grievances.

Besides these instances possibly indicating male authorship, the style of Sowernam's writing also suggests this. She herself recognises that she is more abrasive than befitted a well-conducted woman of the time (1). She even suggests that Swetnam may say she is a railing scold, but she describes herself rather as an 'honest accuser' in that she provides proof for what she alleges. She implies that Swetnam himself is a scold (47).

However, Sowernam does also, not inconsistently with a sophisticated kind of male authorship, speak to the praise of women. This is particularly evident in some parts of her treatment of Genesis. For instance, Sowernam emphasises how superb was the gift of the woman in marriage (6-7). Furthermore, her depiction of Adam after the Fall leads to a judgement about women which is favourable although qualified by reference to the government of women, which could be indicative of either a male or female concern. She portrays him as having hope on account of the promise made to the woman (that the Saviour from sin should be born of a woman) (10), her 'dowrie' according to Sowernam (10; McManus 203), and accordingly



calling her Eve or ‘the mother of the living’. This name refers in part to her ‘dowrie’ but also in part to the functions of herself and all women for which she was created, ‘to be helpers, comforters, Joyes, and delights’ (Sowernam 10). According to Sowernam, women fulfil these functions provided that they are properly governed (Sowernam 10). She opposes this judgement to Swetnam’s claim, which she rejects as unfounded, that God called women necessary evils since he made them to be a plague to men (Swetnam 31, Sowernam 10-11).

It can be concluded that if a man wrote the pamphlet, he nevertheless presents a woman’s persona, as the critics emphasise. According to Jones, her persona is that of ‘a humanistically educated, secular woman of mature years’ (A. Jones, ‘Counterattacks’ 53). Woodbridge identifies another characteristic of Sowernam’s persona. She reflects the litigiousness of women in contemporary plays when she arraigns him in a play in her pamphlet which is entitled ‘*Joseph Swetnam his Enditement*’ (Woodbridge 96; Sowernam 29-31). Purkiss sees Sowernam’s reference to legal processes and her possible association with the Inns of Court as a significant part of her case for regarding her as ‘unruly’. The Inns were frequented by prostitutes and serving women (Purkiss 86). Turning now to McManus, in delineating Sowernam’s persona, she notes Sowernam’s common enterprise with Speght, which would be furthered by Munda. Both Sowernam and Munda, McManus points out, use the ‘we woman [sic]’ persona more than Speght (199). However, McManus sees Sowernam as presenting a more viable feminine subject position than Munda. This subject position derives its credentials from the statement on the title page regarding Sowernam not being maid wife or widow but all, and experienced to defend all. Only women are sufficiently experienced to defend

women. Sovernam's voice, McManus comments, is engaged as well as confident and authoritative in her address to youths, especially London apprentices (McManus 199-200).

It is worth drawing attention to one instance in Sovernam's pamphlet in particular since in it she invokes a situation which is relevant to the commentaries on Ruth. This occurs when she addresses Swetnam's claim that women's beauty brings men to ruin (Swetnam 4; Sovernam 36). Who is to blame for this? Sovernam argues that women's beauty is an accidental cause, and whether there is a lecherous outcome, giving rise to a complaint like Swetnam's, depends on the disposition of the mind (Sovernam 36-8). She cites an example which resembles the situation in Ruth chapter 3:

A man and a woman talke in the fields together, an honest minde will imagine of their talke answerable to his owne disposition, whereas an evill disposed minde will censure according to his lewd inclination.  
(37)

Bernard and his early modern predecessors attribute to Boaz concern that the encounter of Ruth and Boaz by night might give rise to censure or lead people astray. This betrays an anxiety that many minds were indeed 'evill disposed'.

Constantia Munda's pamphlet, The Worming of a mad Dogge: or, A Soppe for Cerberus the Jaylor of Hell, is adorned with languages, especially Latin and Greek, giving an impression, like Sovernam's tract, of greater erudition than Swetnam possesses. This classical knowledge would support the possibility that the writer of the pamphlet may have been a man. Munda scornfully depicts Swetnam's use of his sources and his style (Munda 21-3). She even accuses him of being drunk whilst writing (26). Addressing Swetnam, she alludes to Speght as 'a modest and powerfull hand' who has muzzled his 'blacke grinning mouth' (15). She compliments Speght's

work, noting its modesty, gravity, learning and prudence. However, Speght's reply may not be enough if Swetnam's 'scurrilous and depraving tongue breake prison' (15). Munda hears Swetnam foaming at the mouth and growling at the author, and so has provided this 'sop for *Cerberus*' (16). Munda also mentions Sowernam's pamphlet, with even higher regard – it has superseded her own pamphlet, which she has therefore left in an incomplete state (sig. A2v). It may be that, for commercial reasons, a male writer using the pseudonym Munda is here presenting Sowernam's pamphlet as the last word in order to encourage readers to consult it. Munda's pamphlet provides further hints that it may have been written by a man. Munda speculates why Swetnam has undertaken an attack on women, and the knowledge she exhibits of the domain of prostitution in making her arguments may be explained by her being the voice of a male writer. Swetnam's affections may, in his travels, have been poisoned by a '*bella curtizana de Venetijis*' (Munda 11). He may, in travelling, have become familiar with 'loose, strange, lewd, idle, froward and inconstant' women in brothelhouses (Munda 11). He may, on first going abroad, have come across bad company and lost his fortune at the hands of women (Munda 12)

Munda, despite her declaration that her work is incomplete, does engage with some of Swetnam's argument, for example his claim on p. 31 of his pamphlet, that if God had not made women only to be a plague to men, he would not have called them necessary evils. Munda, like Speght, denies that this is a valid claim (Munda 27). She subsequently censures Swetnam for his tactic of misinterpreting the Scriptures to support his wrong opinion (Munda 28).

Regarding Munda's persona, Woodbridge draws attention to Munda's pugnacity: she 'presents herself as a street scrapper, her confrontation with Swetnam

as an open brawl' (100). She is not afraid to scold (Woodbridge 100), and sometimes shows condescension and ridicule (Woodbridge 101). She recognises, however, that Munda is a woman of erudition, as evidenced by, for example, her classical allusions (Woodbridge 101). A similar assessment is made by Jones, who notes the violence sometimes found in Munda's vocabulary. Munda 'imagines a battle between like and like' as opposed to emphasising her difference from Swetnam (A. Jones, 'Counterattacks' 58). Munda also makes a satirical class attack on Swetnam and his audience in scatological language, indecorous for a woman, in the opening poem addressed to Swetnam (A. Jones, 'Counterattacks' (58-9). Jones sees Munda as representing women as being prepared to meet misogynistic slander with legal action, reacting as fearless viragos. Munda is not at all concerned to conform to traditional requirements for women to express themselves modestly (A. Jones, 'Counterattacks' 60). Purkiss too notes Munda's and others' preparedness to take legal action against Swetnam and his like. She sees Munda's arraignment of Swetnam, like Sowernam's, as suggesting 'a litigiousness characteristically associated also with female financial or sexual greed, and in drama associated with the lower orders and again with prostitutes' (87). According to Purkiss, Munda, like Sowernam, presents herself as the kind of woman Swetnam is attacking and has reason to fear (89). McManus, too, emphasises the threatening vehemence of Munda's persona and her dramatic invective. However, she sees Munda's learning as the dominant feature of her self-presentation (199).

The Swetnam debate thus illustrates a large number of attitudes to women current at the time when Bernard was writing Ruths Recompence. These range from misogyny and rhetorical subjugation to praise. A variety of stereotypes of female

conduct are presented. Furthermore, Speght displays an assertiveness that could not readily be dismissed as mere scolding or unruliness. It may be concluded that the uneasiness generated by this undermining of traditional assumptions would have given rise to a keener interest in the behaviour of Naomi and Ruth.

The fact that models of ideal womanhood are an identifiable characteristic of the speaking voice of the response to Swetnam suggests how ingrained in early modern thinking these models were. Jones develops a similar argument in an earlier essay in which she shows how two women exploited conduct book ideology to further their own ends. She shows that Catherine Des Roches, writing in the latter part of the sixteenth century, ‘inscribes the gender ideology of courtly conduct books at the center of her collected poems’ to demonstrate her feminine purity and so to justify her presence in a literary salon (A. Jones, ‘Nets’ 48, 52). The serving-woman Isabella Whitney, writing in the same period, ‘deploys contemporary gender ideology in order to establish a profitably respectable speaking and writing position for herself’ (A. Jones, ‘Nets’ 63, 65). This strategy may be observed in particular in one of her poems addressed to a duplicitous lover advising him about marriage (A. Jones, ‘Nets’ 64-7). This poem is entitled ‘*I.W. To her unconstant Lover*’ (Clarke 29). In it Whitney presents a sophisticated address to the lover. She illustrates her depiction of male unfaithfulness with classical examples. This balances her classical illustrations of a wife who is ‘good’ according to the standards of Whitney’s day:

With chastnes of PENELOPE  
the which did never fade.

A LUCRES for her constancy,  
and Thisbie for her trueth (lines 99-102)

This extract supports Jones's claim that Whitney weaves 'marriage manual formulas together with classical allusions to produce a popularly aimed poem' (A. Jones, 'Nets' 67). It is a strategy which enables her to give permission to herself, a woman, to write, in a way that makes her acceptable to a conservative if profitable public (A. Jones, 'Nets' 67).

Besides the formal controversy about women, there was also a considerable literature referring to ideals of womanhood. This literature consists of conduct books, mothers' advice books, lives of women in which the subjects are presented as exemplary, and marriage sermons. The prevalent type of conduct book was directed at the bourgeoisie. This type presented the view of the good woman with which the Ruth commentators would have been familiar. The court lady was also addressed by courtesy books. In the view of Peter Stallybrass, the writers of bourgeois conduct books, as represented by William Gouge, William Whately and Richard Snawsel, assume that the body of woman is '*naturally* "grotesque"' (126). Here Stallybrass is referring to Bakhtin's derivation from Rabelais of an opposition between the grotesque body and the classical body. The conduct book writers, Stallybrass claims, aimed at 'the production of a normative 'Woman' within the discursive practices of the ruling elite' (127). He adds that '[t]his "Woman," like Bakhtin's classical body, is rigidly "finished": her signs are the enclosed body, the closed mouth, the locked house' (127). The endeavour to produce this ideal of womanhood is illustrated by conduct books written by Giovanni Bruto (translated into English by Thomas Salter), Richard Brathwait and George Savile, Lord Halifax. These books span most of the period in which the early modern Ruth commentaries were published.

These conduct books were in a tradition firmly established by the humanist, Juan Luis Vives. His De Institutione Foeminae Christianae (1523) was commissioned by Catherine of Aragon for the guidance of her daughter Mary. It was translated into English by Richard Hyrde, a member of Sir Thomas More's household. This translation, entitled The Instruction of a Christian Woman appeared in 1529. According to Valerie Wayne, the book 'was issued in at least thirty-six English and Continental editions and in six modern languages by the end of the sixteenth century' ('Some' 15). However, Hilda L. Smith, surveying Vives's Instruction in the context of English humanism and women's learning, points out that 'it was directed to aristocratic ladies and not to a wide range of English families' (16). It addresses women's conduct more than their education (Wayne, 'Some' 16). According to Wayne: 'As humanists defended women, they also prescribed specific roles for them, especially domestic roles, and they identified a limited function for their learning. The attention they gave to women's chastity also required restraints on other areas of development.' ('Some' 19) Thus, Vives, who especially emphasises chastity, maintains that a woman should not show her learning abroad but rather should remain demure and honest. She should be silent in company. He appeals to the Bible to support these precepts (Wayne, 'Some' 23-5, 19-20). They resemble the prescriptions of the later bourgeois conduct books. In Vives' view, women should read to control their thought. This reading should include religious works especially and should exclude, in particular, chivalrous romance (Wayne, 'Some' 20-1). In addressing the subject of women's education at all, Vives was innovative. His emphasis especially on women's chastity, on the other hand, was derived from previous moralists (Wayne, 'Some' 28). It set the tone for bourgeois

conduct books, many of which, however, also followed Vives in expressing views on women's education.

In the examination of bourgeois conduct books which follows, attention is drawn to undermining in some respects of the conventional expectations that women should be 'Chaste, Silent and Obedient' even though these were core writings outlining characteristics of the ideal woman (Hull). Such undermining corresponds with real women in the early modern period behaving in ways contrary to these expectations. That they did so, as Suzanne Trill has observed, 'problematizes the stability of the category "woman": it highlights the fact that the characteristics associated with that category are socially constructed, rather than naturalised or universal givens' (31). Hilda L. Smith also has drawn attention to the category of women in the Renaissance context: 'Women existed more clearly as a category in the minds of Renaissance authors than as disparate individuals.' (9) The instability of the category 'women' has been addressed by Denise Riley. Riley claims in particular, that this instability is characterised by the 'differing temporalities of "women" – that is, "being a woman" is [. . .] inconstant, and can't provide an ontological foundation'.<sup>62</sup> She puts forward the argument 'that "women" is indeed an unstable category, that this instability has a historical foundation' (5). It is my contention that the enterprising conduct of Naomi and Ruth, enlarged on in the Ruth commentaries, might have encouraged women in the early modern period to act boldly, contrary to conventional expectations, so that instability in the category became more evident.

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<sup>62</sup> Denise Riley, 'Am I That Name?': Feminism and the Category of 'Women' in History 6, 2. Riley elaborates on the concept of differing temporalities of women in the last chapter of the book, 'Bodies, Identities, Feminisms', 96-8, 105, 111, 112.



Giovanni Bruto's La institutione di una fanciulla nata nobilmente (actually addressed to the daughter of a shipping magnate) was published in Italian and French in 1555 and translated into English by Thomas Salter as A Mirrhor mete for all Mothers, Matrones, and Maidens, intituled the Mirrhor of Modestie in 1579 (A. Jones, 'Currency' 23). Salter's preface asserts that the book seeks to rectify faults in the upbringing of maidens (sig. Aiiir-sig. Aiiiv). The body of the book maintains that maidens should imitate their matron, a woman to whose charge and tuition they were committed. '[C]oncerning the Matrone to whom any yong Maiden is to be comitted (I saie) she ought what so ever she be, to be Grave, Prudent, Modest, and of good counsell, to thende that suche Maidens as she hath in tutying, maie learne her honeste and womanlie demeanoure' (sig. Aviv, sig. Aviiiv). This modelling is reminiscent of Naomi's mentoring of Ruth in the perception of the Ruth commentators. A major theme of Mirrhor is the education proper for young women. They should read the Holy Scripture and good books treating virtuous women such as those written by Plutarch and, more recently, by Boccas (Salter sig. Ciiiv). A young woman following this recommendation might seek a model in the women characters in Ruth. However, Mirrhor is opposed to young women reading, in particular, moral and natural philosophy on the grounds that these subjects inform the reader of human vice (sig. Bvir). Household instruments rather than the pen are the appropriate tools for women (Salter sig. Ciir). Mirrhor develops its version of ideal womanhood. Religion and piety should be instilled by the matron in the young woman (Salter Ciiir). She 'shall inforce her to be humble, and lowly of harte' (Salter sig. Ciiiv). Women should not succumb to gluttony, and should above all remain chaste (Salter sig. Dir). The young woman should not lie but confess her

offences (Salter sig. Div). However, she should not show excessive ‘shamefastnesse’ or fearfulness, just as she should not be too bold (Salter sig. Diiir). She is enjoined to show friendliness and courtesy to all, including her inferiors (Salter sig. Diir). This instruction indicates an undermining of the requirement for silence in the ideal bourgeois woman, despite the fact that it is immediately followed by the stipulation that the maiden should not be ‘a babler or greate talker’ (Salter sig. Diir). The latter injunction is reinforced by an argument from nature: ‘she ought to know that the use of the tounge is to be used soberly and discretly, for to that ende nature, that wise woorkewoman ordained the tounge to bee inclosed as with a hedge within twoo rowes of teeth’ (Salter sig. Diiv). All these qualities called for in the young woman appear in Ruth in the biblical story which the commentators expounded.

Mirrhor also enjoins various modes of behaviour which are less central to the chaste, silent and obedient stereotype. For instance, it enjoins the matron to admonish the maiden not to follow fashions in attire, but rather to concentrate on the virtues of the mind (sig. Cvv-sig. Cvir). This advice is later developed, when it is stated that apparel is made good or bad by use. In particular the maiden should not be envious of others or cause others to envy her and think her arrogant and ambitious because she wears pompous attire or extravagant ornaments: ‘But to bee alwaies modestly arraied.’ (Salter sig. Diiir) Such injunctions are part of the background to Topsell’s and Bernard’s discussion of apparel in Ruth chapter 3. Furthermore, Mirrhor states that the young woman should not show affectation (sig. Diiiiv-sig. Dvr). Again, this is a requirement which Ruth meets in the biblical story.

Turning now to Richard Brathwait's The English Gentlewoman (1631), it is significant that on two occasions, both in the chapter on 'Fancy', he explicitly mentions Ruth. Both times, constancy in love is the context. Moreover, Brathwait's use of Ruth and his further discussion following the first mention of Ruth support Lawrence Stone's perception that the concept of companionate marriage, which was advocated as early as the Reformation (by Calvin, in particular), was developed by writers in England into the seventeenth century (136). The first instance of Brathwait drawing on Ruth occurs in his argument that '*Fancy is to be with constancy retained.*' (135). In choosing husbands, women are to bear in mind that they should be committed to their husbands. They are to apply Ruth's words to Naomi: '*Whither thou goest, I will goe: and where thou dwellest, I will dwell*' (Brathwait 135). This quotation is reinforced by a rendering of Caia Tranquilla's words to her spouse, Caius Tarquinius Priscus, in classical times: '*Where thou art Caius, I am Caia*' (Brathwait 135). Brathwait goes on to address his major concern, that a gentlewoman should accept a suitor if, on deliberation, she finds him genuine (135-7). He then engages with marriage relations. In particular, he cites the example of Theogena who stood by her husband even when others deserted him: '*Shee had not onely betaken her selfe to be his Companion in prosperity, but in all fortunes that should befall him.*' (Brathwait 137) Here, Brathwait makes explicit the importance of companionship in marriage, which is indicated by his quotation from Ruth above. His later quotation from Ruth again indicates companionship in marriage. Once a gentlewoman has judged her suitor deserving, she should remain constant to him, and when he is her husband, he will daily say Boaz's words to Ruth: '*Blessed be thou of the Lord, my Spouse; thou hast shewed more goodnesse in the latter end, than at*

*thy beginning, in as much as thou followest not young men, were they poore or rich.'* (Brathwait 144). As he goes on to emphasise (144), Brathwait is here concerned with the need to check love if it is directed to a man who is not genuine. Such a man, once married, might not be expected to recognise the value of his wife's rejection of others for his sake.

Attention will now be given to Stone's work, The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800, in the first place because of his noting of the influence of Calvin's stress on the ideal of companionate marriage. Preparatory to engaging with Stone's argument, it is worth emphasising a point in connection with the subject of companionate marriage as addressed by the reformers. The significance of their insistence on companionship in marriage is sometimes obscured by their emphasis at the same time on the subordinate position of the wife. In The Obedience of a Christian Man (1528), William Tyndale has a whole section on the wife's duty of obedience to her husband. But in a later section, on marriage itself, he speaks of its provision for 'the man to help the woman and the woman the man with all love and kindness' (34, 110). It will be pointed out that Stone sees an antithesis in this regard in the case of early seventeenth-century preachers.

Stone's thesis is that at various times in the early modern period, different types of families predominated in England. He addresses the companionate marriage chiefly in the chapter (chapter 8) devoted to it in part 4 of the book, which is concerned with the Closed Domesticated Nuclear Family 1640-1800.<sup>63</sup> The later

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<sup>63</sup> This is the third family type depicted by Stone. Owing to changes in the Church and state, and in society, two trends developed, producing this family type. Firstly, patriarchy in the family became less than before, resulting in more freedom for wives in particular. Secondly, external pressures on the family continued a decline seen in the preceding family type. The Closed Domesticated Nuclear Family was organised around the principle of personal autonomy. Affection in the family was strong, with future spouses choosing each other rather than parents arranging matches. Children were brought up more leniently than before. Privacy was valued. (Stone 7-8)

date focused on here is indicated in his claim that foreign observers saw a movement towards companionate marriages, particularly at the top and bottom of society by the second half of the eighteenth century (Stone 328). However, Stone's starting point in this chapter is early seventeenth-century preachers' advocacy of companionship in marriage (325). That is, he traces a continuity between the developments from the Reformation vision of the companionate marriage and the later stage. This later stage, however, may be regarded as to a large degree not in conflict with the demands of patriarchy, unlike the earlier stage; it was associated with the Closed Domesticated Nuclear Family type which Stone identifies with a reduction in patriarchal emphasis (7, 8).

Stone discusses those earlier developments which occurred in England in his analysis in chapter 4 of the decline of kinship, clientage and community in the shift from the Open Lineage Family (1450-1630)<sup>64</sup> to the Restricted Patriarchal Nuclear Family (1550-1700).<sup>65</sup> To begin with, Stone finds evidence of the sanctification of marriage in the Reformation, by contrast with Roman Catholic idealizing of chastity – it recurred in sixteenth-century sermons, and was, notably, depicted by William Perkins. It was also propounded in moral theology in the early seventeenth century (Stone 135-6). Stone moves on to trace the development of thinking on conjugal

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<sup>64</sup> This is the first family type depicted by Stone. It was characterised by the fact that it was permeable to outside influences, and by the fact that its members had a sense of loyalty to ancestors and living kin. Personal autonomy was not valued. Moreover, affective relations were cool. Marriages were generally arranged for future spouses by others. Furthermore, children were treated with severity. Patriarchy ruled. This type of family was short-lived owing to death or children leaving home (Stone 4-7).

<sup>65</sup> This is the second family type depicted by Stone. In it loyalties to lineage, kin, patron and local community became more and more replaced by other loyalties – to the nation state and church or sect. Therefore the (nuclear) family became closed off to a greater degree from external influences of kin or community. Meanwhile, the state and Church reinforced the patriarchy already in the family, with the result that the husband had greater power over his wife and children (Stone 7).

Stone's argument that the developments outlined below contributed to the decline of the influence of kinship is based on the way he sees kin's inhibition of marital emotional bonding in the Open Lineage Family being subverted by religious encouragement of married love (Stone 138).

affection. It is here that he draws attention to the influence on English thought of Calvin's ideal of the companionate marriage. He also notes Bullinger's similar influence on the English in his depiction of marriage partners' friendship and their help and comfort of each other (136). Thus, Calvin and Bullinger were followed by English writers from the sixteenth century who, like Archbishop Cranmer in the 1549 Prayer Book, included spiritual intimacy amongst the purposes of marriage. These English writers included Perkins, Thomas Gataker and William Gouge. This tradition, Stone observes, was further developed by Puritans in the mid and later seventeenth century (Stone 136). The period referred to here includes the earlier seventeenth century, which is the starting point in Stone's chapter 8; in particular, it is when Brathwait was writing, and his use of Ruth, especially, to express companionship in marriage is consistent with the writings of these contemporaries.

Stone goes so far as to argue that the early seventeenth-century preachers' advocacy of companionship in marriage undermined to some degree their view that wives should be subservient (325). That is, he sees an antithesis, a conclusion noted above when mentioning Tyndale, and he claims an outcome which reduced patriarchal emphasis. He also sees a change in the status of women when individuals were allowed to make their own choice of their marriage partner. This concession occurred, in Stone's view, once it was perceived that affection might not develop following marriage (325). This was problematic since in England divorce and remarriage were not lawful and affection, particularly called for in these circumstances, might not exist where the parents arranged the match (Stone 137). According to Stone, increasingly in the eighteenth century, the future spouses

making their own choices sought emotional satisfaction more than income. Relationships between the marriage partners therefore became equalized (Stone 325).

The issue of individuals choosing their own marriage partners arises in Brathwait's chapter on 'Fancy'. The anecdotes at the beginning of the chapter concern both parents and future wives making a choice. For instance, in one, a Greek nobleman asked a man whether he would prefer to marry his daughter to a rich, evil man or a poor, good man (Brathwait 130). However, another anecdote indicates that the future wife could claim some part in the decision. A suitor only broached the subject of marriage to a woman after he had concluded the matter with her father. He was met with resistance from the daughter (Brathwait 130). Furthermore, in another instance, the younger daughter of Portius Cato said that she would marry when she found a man who sought her, not hers (Brathwait 130). This last case suggests the situation which Brathwait apparently considers the gentlewomen he addresses in this chapter to be in. This situation is indicated by a question the wisely loving future wife asks: "Is he, who is here recommended to my choyce, of good repute? [. . .]" (Brathwait 151). This question implies that the future wife may choose a partner from a number of men approved by others, such as her parents. Brathwait, in the chapter, offers advice on making a choice. It may be concluded that Brathwait presents an early stage in the freeing of future spouses to choose their partners. Developments in the equality of women in marriage are more effectively sought in a later period. However, Brathwait demonstrates clearly how important he finds this freedom of future spouses to choose; it makes possible genuine companionship in marriage.

The question of divorce in connection with companionship in marriage was also addressed by Brathwait's younger contemporary, John Milton. He did this in order to make a case for divorce. A consideration of Milton's argument, which is related by Stone, provides a fuller context for considering Brathwait's emphasis on companionship in marriage. The unhappily married Milton held that marriage was primarily for companionship, and advocated divorce and remarriage in the case of temperamental incompatibility. Where there was no love, there was only a husk of marriage; hatred was worse than adultery (Stone 137-8). However, like the early reformers, Milton insisted on the subordination of women, so he allowed divorce only in cases when the wife showed 'unfitness' (Stone 138).

Brathwait's reference to companionship in marriage may be further illuminated by Bernard's views in Ruths Recompence, published three years earlier. Bernard uses the word 'companions', similarly to Brathwait, in his exposition of Ruth 1.1, where Elimelech went with his family to Moab: 'wives and children are to be companions with their husbands and parents in adversitie' (13). Bernard refers to the whole family here, as opposed to the conjugal pair. However, earlier in the passage, focusing on the husband's commitments, he derives from the Bible the rule that the wife is as the man, and so to be loved (13). He is evidently concerned with the marital relationship specifically. Moreover, the biblical examples he goes on to give of companioning after the quotation above are of women following men (including Sarah following Abraham). Bernard emphasises the wife's obedience in following, by drawing attention to the husband's headship (13). His perception of marital companionship is based on inequality.



Bernard further discusses marital companionship in his exposition of Naomi's observation in Ruth 1.8 that Ruth and Orpah have dealt kindly with the dead and with her. According to Bernard, Christian women must strive to be good wives and children lest these heathen women, whom Naomi praises as good wives to their husbands, now dead, put them to shame. Bernard sets out what the duty of the good wife consists in. Notably, one element is 'sympathizing with her husband in prosperity and adversity'. Once again, Bernard brings male superiority into the picture when he declares the function of the husband in making his partner a good wife:

But where is the woman? where is this *Sarah*, this *Rebecca*? Shee will answer perhaps, Where there is an *Abraham*, and an *Isaac*; for a good husband will make a good wife; a good *John*, a good *Joane*: the body will obey, where the head knoweth how to rule well. (RR 50)

The fact that both Brathwait and Bernard engage with companionship in marriage indicates the currency of this quality. Bernard also repeatedly mentions kinship and, in expounding Boaz's kinship to Elimelech in Ruth 2.1, laments a decline in kin interactions, in a way that confirms the complexities analysed by Stone:

[K]indred are bone of bone, as the *Israelites* spake of David <2 Sam. 5.1> and are as the branches from one roote, and as members of one body, and therefore must love one another; which reproveth this age, which careth not for their kindred, except they bee rich, which is the sinne of unnaturalnesse, 2 Tim. 3. (128)

Bernard also points out the duties of kin to each other in other places in the commentary (see in particular, pp.375-7, 464). This promotion of kin influence whilst recognising its decline is consistent with Stone's claim that kinship ties only slowly declined in the course of several centuries as they were no longer needed (Stone 150). Evidently, Bernard's and Brathwait's writings fit Stone's argument that

companionship in marriage developed at this time of irregularly declining kin influence.

The English Gentlewoman as a whole, has much to say about women's conduct. In the chapter on estimation, that is, 'a good opinion drawne from some probable grounds' (Brathwait 101), Brathwait makes a prolonged discussion of the qualities which women at different life stages, that is, virgins, wives and widows, should endeavour to attain (106-114). This discussion centres on chastity. Thus, first he calls for the virtuousness of virgins: 'Are you Virgins? dedicate those inward Temples of yours to chastity; abstaine from all corrupt society; inure your hands to workes of piety, your tongues to words of modesty.' (106) Having praised the virgin state, he turns to wives. He illustrates their duty to nurture their children with examples of mothers of former times who instructed and cared for their children, several of these women being learned (108-9). Moreover, he sets out the qualities of these women, central amongst which is chastity. They were 'patternes of piety, presidents of purity, champions of chastity, mirroures of modesty, jewels of integrity' (109). He subsequently commends them for their obedience to their husbands: 'They knew what it was to obey; that it was not fit for an *inferiour member* to command the *head*, nor for them to soveraignize over their husbands.' (109-110) Obedience to the husband was taught by mothers to their daughters (Brathwait 110). Brathwait asks wives to imitate these women in the light of Christianity, and turns to widows (110). He asserts the importance of chastity to widows in particular: 'This inestimable inheritance of Chastity is incomparably more to be esteemed, and with greater care preserved by *Widowes* then *Wives*: albeit, by these neither to be neglected, but highly valued.' (111) As will be noted, such an opinion, and such a development of it as

Brathwait makes, may well have informed the judgement of the early modern commentators on Ruth, particularly in their treatments of chapters 2 and 3, in which they perceive sexual danger to Ruth, who is a widow. In this address to widows, Brathwait also asserts that widows should instruct and correct and be an example to others. They should also pray and perform works of devotion often (111-2). The Ruth commentators seem to have approved Naomi for behaving in this way. Brathwait concludes the discussion by exhorting widows to commemorate their dead husbands, citing the examples of two Roman women who lived with women after the deaths of their husbands (113). Again, such an emphasis on the part of the Ruth commentators would find resonance with the story of Orpah's and especially Ruth's dutifulness towards their dead husbands.

Brathwait's address to virgins, wives and widows makes evident his essential conformity with the chaste and obedient requirements of the bourgeois ideal. He also makes a number of injunctions regarding silence. In the chapter on behaviour, he insists that '[t]o enter into much discourse or familiarity with strangers, argues lightnesse or indiscretion: what is spoken of Maids, may be properly applied by an usefull consequence to all women: *They should be seene, and not heard*' (41). Again, in the chapter on decency, he makes an argument from nature reminiscent of Salter's: 'What restraint is required in respect of the tongue, may appeare by that ivory guard or garrison with which it is impaled. See, how it is double warded, that it may with more reservancy and better security be restrained!' (88) Brathwait subsequently stipulates which subjects women should and should not talk about. He particularly enjoins women not to discourse about divinity. Women should rather

preferably talk about household matters and other private employments (Brathwait 89-90).

Further aspects of the ideal woman are also developed. Brathwait, like Salter, warns against affectation.<sup>66</sup> The Ruth commentators were faced with unaffected behaviour in Naomi and Ruth, which may have encouraged them to recognise the value of their resourcefulness and initiative. There is also a significant emphasis in The English Gentlewoman on the gentlewoman's willingness to be charitable to the poor. This is consistent with the commentators' stress on the kindnesses in the primitive society of Ruth. One instance is Brathwait's depiction of the gentlewoman's liberality and compassion to those needing relief in the chapter on honour (202-3). Brathwait also modifies the bourgeois ideal, for example, in his allowing that women may engage in public affairs: 'Now for *publike* Employments, I know all are not borne to be *Deborahs*, to beare virile spirits in feminine bodies. Yet, in *chusing the better part*, you may fit and accommodate your persons to *publike affaires*, well sorting and suting with your ranke and quality.' (51). This is a remarkable recognition by a writer defining women's conduct of the actual capacities of women.

The restrictions on women in the ideal in bourgeois conduct books were adhered to as much at the end as at the beginning of the early modern period.<sup>67</sup> The other category of conduct book, courtesy books, was directed at those at court. A representative example, Baldassare Castiglione's The Book of the Courtier engages

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<sup>66</sup> Especially, Brathwait 55-58.

<sup>67</sup> The tenor of Salter's and Brathwaite's delineation of the bourgeois ideal of womanly conduct is maintained in Lord Halifax's The Lady's New-year Gift: or Advice to a Daughter, which was published in several editions towards the end of the seventeenth century. For instance, the second chapter, on the husband, imposes subservience to men (Halifax 26). Halifax also coincides with Brathwait, and with the Salter translation too, in denouncing affectation in various places, particularly his chapter on vanity and affectation.

in its third book with the formal controversy, as has been mentioned. Because the women in the society it portrays are remote from the women in Ruth, little more will be said about it here. It can merely be noted that in the epistle of the translator in The Courtyer, Sir Thomas Hoby asserts the relevance of the book to the conduct of Ladies and gentlewomen; it is ‘a mirrour to decke and trimme themselves with vertuous condicions, comely behaviours and honest enterテインment toward al men’ (7).<sup>68</sup>

Another type of conduct literature is the mother’s advice book. Valerie Wayne has examined five mothers’ advice books first published in England between 1604 and 1624 and often reprinted (‘Advice’ 56-79). She shows that these books were characterised by contradictions. This is exemplified by Elizabeth Joceline’s The Mothers Legacie (1624). Joceline, a well educated woman, wishes a daughter to apply herself to the Bible, housewifery, writing and good works. She advises against other learning, since it is not always accompanied by wisdom. However, she writes approvingly of the wise, learned, virtuous woman. Furthermore, she depicts such a woman with two metaphors which have opposite associations with domesticity – the closet and the ship. In doing so she shows ‘her own ambivalence toward confinement’ (Wayne, ‘Advice’ 64). The effect of her advice is to deny a daughter the model of womanhood she herself represents. Rather, she recommends a conservative model which is at variance with her appropriation of the mode of public discourse, which generally excludes women (Wayne, ‘Advice’ 65). Elizabeth Grymeston’s mother’s advice book, Miscelanea, Meditations, Memoratives (1604), is largely derivative (Wayne, ‘Advice’ 65). Wayne argues regarding Grymeston’s

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<sup>68</sup> Hoby’s translation was done in Paris in 1552-3 and published in 1561 (Kelly, ODNB).

advice: '[T]he origins of that advice were mediated by the cultural pressures surrounding their articulation, and the applications of the advice could be far from liberatory.' ('Advice' 66) Wayne indicates further aspects of the model of the ideal woman advocated in these texts in her consideration of the problems they give rise to concerning the subjectivity of early modern women. All the five women authors were from the upper classes and Wayne draws attention to the view that upper class women's reproductive role was emphasised since they tended not to be involved in economic production.<sup>69</sup> These authors' stress on the maternal function of women could reinforce the enclosure of woman in the house. Women authors also generally accepted the importance of chastity. Dorothy Leigh, in The Mothers Blessing (1616), defines the chaste woman by contrast with the unchaste woman, so developing a model of the ideal submissive woman. Such a woman is not idle or prone to vanity or pride in dress, possesses humility and Christian virtues, and is always reading, meditating or applying a lesson from Scripture (Wayne, 'Advice' 66-7). Leigh interprets '*Thy desire shall be subject to thy husband*' (Genesis 3.16) to mean that women of themselves shall not have desires. As Wayne argues, 'It is at this point that definitions of chastity begin to pose a serious threat to women's agency, because subjection is reconfigured as a loss of the desiring self.' ('Advice' 67) Leigh's model of the ideal woman, in this respect, reinforces those of certain male writers who developed this doctrine of displacement of the wife's desire (Wayne, 'Advice' 67-8). Wayne concludes that the women writing mothers' advice books were 'useful agents in disseminating the dominant ideology' although they

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<sup>69</sup> Wayne, 'Advice' 66, citing Patricia Crawford, 'The Construction and Experience of Maternity in Seventeenth-Century England', in Valerie Fildes, ed., Women as Mothers in Pre-Industrial England (London: Routledge, 1990) 14.

‘also modified received opinion in order to reflect their own interests and concerns’.  
(‘Advice’ 72)

Other literary genres found in the early modern period providing examples of ideal womanhood are exemplary funeral sermons and biographies. These works emphasise the conformity of the women subjects to the ideal. However, they also indicate that such women diverged from the bourgeois norms of chastity, silence and obedience, and thus problematise the stability of the category ‘women’. In this respect they are useful for their comparability with the Ruth commentaries, which endeavour to expound the sometimes surprising behaviour of Naomi and Ruth. Two of these works will be considered here. Their subjects are Katherine Stubs and Jane Ratcliffe. Betty S. Travitsky’s essay about Elizabeth Egerton will also be drawn on since it provides an account of the woman’s life, in particular, in terms of how she was esteemed by her husband.

The biography by Phillip Stubs of his wife, Katherine, A Crystall Glasse, For Christian Women, gives an account of her life and approach to death from fever following the birth of her son. Its enormous popularity is evident from the fact that it went through several editions, the first being in 1591. In this work, Phillip, speaking of his wife’s married life of almost four and a half years after the age of fifteen, emphasises her zealous piety amongst her universally praised exemplary characteristics: ‘[She lived with her husband] with rare commendation of all that knew her, as well for her singular wisdom, as also for her modesty, courtesie, gentlenesse, affability, and good government, and above all, for her fervent zeale which she did beare to the truth’ (Stubs sig. A2v). For her husband, then, her good womanhood includes an active piety which some might have regarded as Puritanical.

This piety caused her to express herself in forthright speech, despite the conventional expectation that women should be reticent:

if she chanced at any time to be in place where either Papists or Atheists were, and heard them talk of Religion, what countenance or credit soever they seemed to be of, she would not yield a jot, or give place to them at al, but would most mightily justifie the truth of God against blasphemous untruths, and convince them, yea, and confound them by the testimonies of the word of God. (Stubs sig. A2v)

Nevertheless, Katherine's subjection to her husband is evident, in particular in his guidance of her religious study. Phillip commends her conventional conduct in this respect: 'She obeyed the Commandement of the Apostle who biddeth women to be silent, and to learn of their Husbands at home.' (Stubs sig. A2v) Furthermore, in her confession of faith, made shortly before her death and reproduced by her husband, she accepts orthodox restrictions on the role of women in the life of the church: 'I faithfully beleieve, that it is no more lawfull for a Woman to Minister this Sacrament, then it is lawfull for her to preach, or to minister the Sacrament of the Lords Supper' (Stubs sig. B4v). However the confession also provides a glimpse of a woman's boldness in exercising a grasp of complex ideas. She demonstrates her grasp of theological concepts particularly in her distinction between the location of Christ's body and that of his deity (Stubs sig. B2v). Furthermore, she shows her capacity for theological argument in her discussion of the significance of good works and in her exposition of her belief in predestination (Stubs sig. B2v-sig. B3v). Thus, Stubs evinced a degree of audacity which was nevertheless authorised by her husband's authority.

John Ley's discourse on the life of Mrs Jane Ratcliffe, A Patterne of Pietie. Or The Religious life and death of that Grave and gracious Matron, Mrs Jane Ratcliffe, was published in 1640. According to the title page, part of it was preached. This



discourse is particularly significant when considering early modern commentaries on *Ruth* because Ley quotes from *Ruth* 3.11 at the beginning of chapter 1 and expounds the quotation, and reformulates it twice later in the book.<sup>70</sup> He also recurrently identifies Jane Ratcliffe with Ruth. She is ‘our *Ruth* the *Israelite*’, ‘our gracious *Ruth*’, ‘our pious *Ruth*’, ‘our religious *Ruth*’, ‘this devout and vertuous *Ruth*’, ‘this *Ruth*’, ‘our grave and gracious *Ruth*’, ‘our Evangelicall *Ruth*’, ‘a most vertuous *Ruth*’, ‘our Christian *Ruth*’.<sup>71</sup> These descriptions are consistent with the bourgeois ideal.<sup>72</sup> Ley indicates, in his exposition of the quotation from *Ruth* 3.11 at the beginning of the book, that he identifies Ratcliffe so strongly with Ruth because they both experienced religious conversion.<sup>73</sup> He writes: ‘Upon the first reading of this Text, I doubt not but your thoughts (though they immediately light on *Ruth* the *Moabite*) soone turned from her to our *Ruth* the *Israelite*’ (1). The juxtaposition of ‘*Ruth* the *Moabite*’ with ‘our *Ruth* the *Israelite*’ here draws attention to Ruth’s conversion to the Israelite religion. Moreover, Ratcliffe is identified specifically with the converted Ruth. Despite his identification of Ratcliffe with Ruth, Ley shows dissatisfaction with Ruth by his including her, with Naomi, amongst the biblical women whose faults he maintains Ratcliffe would not have exhibited:

*Naomi* and *Ruth* were very vertuous women, yet am I confident shee would not have given such advice as the one did to returne to an Idolatrous devotion, *Ruth* 1.15. nor have followed the [sic:] advise as the

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<sup>70</sup> This quotation from *Ruth* 3.11 is: ‘*All the Citie of my people doth know that thou art a vertuous Woman*’. (Ley 1.) The reformulations are on pp. 174 and 198 of Ley’s book.

<sup>71</sup> Ley 1, 14 & 121 & 167, 38, 42 & 137, 67, 154, 178, 180, 180-1, 192.

<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, in chapter 6, Ley, showing his practice of identifying Ratcliffe with other figures besides Ruth, compares her with Abigail in her prudence, discernible in speech, silence, carriage and actions. Regarding silence, he compares her with David in that, being moved by various parts of the scriptures, she made David’s resolution, expressed in psalm 17.3, that her mouth should not transgress. To ensure this, she employed the bridle referred to in psalm 39.1. (Ley 28-30.) Here, again, Ratcliffe is portrayed as behaving consistently with the bourgeois ideal.

<sup>73</sup> Ley depicts Ratcliffe’s conversion in chapter 4, ‘*Of her Conversion wrought both by Instruction and Correction*’.

other did, to take up her lodging with danger both of sinne and of scandall, Ruth 3.13, 14. (154-5)

The first fault mentioned here indicates a problem that Bernard, in particular, found in the early part of the biblical story (RR 79, 85). The second fault, that of Ruth, reveals Ley's critical interpretation of Ruth's spending the night with Boaz in chapter 3. As Ley himself was involved in the production of a commentary, 'Annotations On the Book of Ruth' (1645), he would have been familiar with existing biblical commentaries, and with their treatments of these parts of the biblical story.<sup>74</sup> In alluding to these episodes here he aims to show how Ratcliffe surpasses those with whom he identifies her. The 'problem' of exemplarity in Ruth, discussed below, is here applied to the depiction of an ideal woman in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Such a woman would not have behaved as Naomi and Ruth did.

However, Ratcliffe did not conform to the subservient ideal as much as might appear, as Peter Lake convincingly shows in his article, 'Feminine Piety and Personal Potency: the "Emancipation" of Mrs Jane Ratcliffe' (1987), in which he analyses Ley's book. According to Lake, Ratcliffe is an example of a woman who was enabled by her Puritan piety and zeal to assert herself to a significant degree against male authority (143-4). In this respect her behaviour resonates with aspects of the behaviour of the women in Ruth from chapter 1 onwards which Bernard and his predecessors recognise and find increasing difficulty in accepting. Lake demonstrates his argument by reading Ley's approving life of Ratcliffe "'against the grain" of the ideology inscribed within the text' (144). He demonstrates how,

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<sup>74</sup> 'Annotations On the Book of Ruth' is in ? John Downname, ed., Annotations upon all the Books of the Old and New Testament (London, 1645). Ley is amongst those associated with this work on the Old and New Testament according to EEBO, the BMC and Wing. EEBO comments that J. Downname may have been the editor or compiler of the work. I would point out that Ley's allusion to scandal with reference to Ruth 3.13, 14. in Patterne (1640) resonates with the allusion to scandal with reference to III. V. 14 in ? Downname, ed., Annotations. This supports the view that Ley was involved with the production of ? Downname, ed., Annotations.

following her conversion, she, probably unconsciously, used her godliness to transgress conventional norms and yet met male approval. For instance, she showed nonconformity regarding a prayer book ceremony which seemed to her to be popish. This ceremony was the manner of receiving the sacrament, that is, on the knees. Lake relates Ley's account, according to which Ratcliffe from the time of her conversion was motivated by an awareness of sin to scruple over this ceremony, following the example of people who objected to popish superstition. However, when she was threatened with suspension from communion, she consulted books and religious people on the issue. She subsequently conformed to receiving the sacrament upon her knees. Lake emphasises the embarrassment her suspension would have caused her husband. He writes of her assertion in connection with the issue of conformity: 'is it pushing the evidence too far to see in all this a woman using every handle provided by godly principle to create a godly and therefore potent persona for herself and to appropriate both private and public arenas [. . .] for its exercise?' (153). Furthermore, Lake argues that Ratcliffe's godliness enabled her 'if not to resist, then to circumvent, the usual constraints of female existence' with respect to her widowhood (158). He quotes Ley's assertion that Ratcliffe decided not to remarry after her husband's death partly so as to be freer to serve God. Lake draws attention to her consequent focus on private devotions in female company (153). He suggests that God replaced her husband as patriarchal authority, and he argues that 'it was the very completeness of her subjection to one male authority figure – God – which was the ground of her relative freedom from social and sexual obligation to other lesser, masculine authorities' (154). The parallels with the widows Naomi and Ruth whilst they were travelling to Judah are apparent.

Travitsky focuses on a manuscript by Elizabeth Egerton, countess of Bridgewater (1626-1663) consisting of prayers, essays on marriage and widowhood, a profession of faith, poems and comments on family events (243). Travitsky draws attention to the epitaphs her husband had engraved on their tombs. In his epitaph, the earl attested to the happiness of his marriage, accounting the countess to be the best of wives (Travitsky 241). Although Egerton led a conventional married life, she was related to a number of prominent figures, including her stepmother, the author, Margaret Cavendish, duchess of Newcastle (Travitsky 244). Travitsky observes that:

The writings fall well within the limits allowed the conventional woman of the period, and John Egerton, noting his late wife's 'eminent Piety in Composing, and . . . Modesty in Concealing' her work (Chauncey 489<sup>75</sup>), was asserting that his countess remained within the bounds of silence prescribed for the seventeenth-century woman. (245)

However, she points out that the papers may have been edited by the earl and may not be complete (245-6). Regarding the essays on marriage and widowhood, Travitsky comments that:

They constitute a female counterpart to the abundance of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century prescriptive works by men concerning the family, which describe the roles of each of its members [. . .] Egerton's essays are both fascinating and instructive in showing us how a contemporary woman might internalize their dicta. (251)

She points out that in the essay concerning marriage the countess accepts the subordination of the wife to her husband, and suggests that this results from her husband's sensitivity to her (251-2). Again, 'The writers of the domestic tracts expended a great deal of energy in idyllic descriptions of companionate marriage, but the simplicity of the countess's discussion has a charm, which perhaps emanates from its revelation of her actual experience.' (Travitsky 252) Thus, she does not wish the wife to be in awe of her husband like a servant of his master, but to be

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<sup>75</sup> Henry Chauncey, The Historical Antiquities of Hertfordshire (London, 1700).

affectionate towards him and speak her mind. This view is similar to Bernard's with reference to Ruth 3.9, where he sees Ruth as promising to be 'humble and serviceable' to Boaz on the grounds that she called herself his handmaid:

not that wives should be counted in condition as servants: for as that is more then they will grant, so is it more then husbands of right ought to expect from them that be their yoke-fellowes: but what maid-servants and handmaidens doe of feare, and servile dutie, wives should do of love with chearefulnes such offices, as they ought to performe unto their husbands, who have authoritie to command. (279)

Travitsky comments on the essay, on both marriage and widowhood, that it too shows conservative thinking. For instance, Egerton again emphasises the obedience of the wife to her husband (Travitsky 252-3). Also, she disapproves of widows remarrying, possibly because she had 'internalized traditional male discomfort about the widow' (Travitsky 253). Elizabeth Egerton, then, is an example of a woman who essentially conformed to the subservient model but the fact that she expressed her thought in writing may indicate that she was to some degree at variance with that model. However, it was not uncommon for lives of exemplary women of the seventeenth century to include extracts from their writing. An example is Mary Rich some of whose 'Pious and Useful Meditations' were annexed to her life (Walker 143-213). This was developed from her funeral sermon of April 30, 1678 by the preacher, her father-in-law's household chaplain, Anthony Walker (Mendelson, ODNB).

A final example of conduct literature formulating a model of women's behaviour is sermons about marriage. These, together with the discourse on Jane Ratcliffe, part of which was preached, are perhaps the closest genre to the early modern commentaries on Ruth of Bernard and his predecessors of the literature considered here. These commentaries also were presented as sermons. R. Valerie

Lucas points out that in England from the 1580s to the 1620s, preachers took on the task of dignifying marriage (224). Furthermore, they attempted to reconcile women, who commonly were insubordinate, to biblically authorised subservience in marriage and to the loss of their economic independence and the majority of their legal rights on marriage (Lucas 232-4, 224, 228, 226.). This endeavour was assisted by the fact that legislation such as the Act of 1593 made church attendance compulsory for adults (Lucas 226). Lucas observes that ‘[t]he preachers developed a role model for women by expounding upon biblical paradigms set forth in Genesis and by St. Paul and St. Peter: “thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee” (Genesis 3.16).’ (227) They used ‘rhetorical strategies of persuasion, manipulation, and (at times) evasion [. . .] to entice a female audience’s acceptance of notions of male authority and female submission’ (Lucas 228). Amongst the literature Lucas analyses is Thomas Gataker’s A Wife in Deed<sup>76</sup> (1623). She shows how ‘[s]tructured like a guessing game, it invites its audience to define “a wife indeed,” and its questions lead women to examine their own consciences and, by doing so, to discover their wifely duties’ (231). This sermon was preceded by another marriage sermon by Gataker, A Good Wife Gods Gift (1620). In A Good Wife Gods Gift, Gataker, preaching from Proverbs 19.14, expresses a contrast between a good wife and a bad wife (2). The qualities of a good wife are stated when Gataker instructs ‘what principally to aime at in the choise of a wife: to wit, at virtue and wisdom, discretion and godlines’ (Good Wife 17). Regarding the wife’s duty to her husband, she must ‘resolve to give her self wholly to him as her Owner’, not forsake him, ‘Nor to refuse to be ruled by him: but *submit and subject* her self unto him’ (Gataker,

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<sup>76</sup> This title is a reworking of the expression ‘a widow indeed’ (1 Tim. 5.5).

Good Wife 21-2). This is the lot God has given her (Gataker, Good Wife 22). A Wife in Deed is preached from Proverbs 18.22, and again Gataker begins by distinguishing between a good and a bad wife (2). The qualities which he asserts must be present for a wife to be good are 'pietie, honesty, sobriety, modesty, and wisdom' (Gataker, Wife in Deed 6). He later focuses on the injunction of the Apostles that a wife is '*subject and obedient to her Husband, as her Head*' (Wife in Deed 14).

A literary phenomenon in the early modern period which has been discussed by Judith Bronfman, the publication of the story of Griselda in various forms, added to the emphasis on the subservient woman (Bronfman 211-223). According to Bronfman, the story, related by Boccaccio, Petrarch and Chaucer, runs as follows:

A peasant girl promises absolute obedience to a marquis and marries him. Her two children are taken away, presumably to be killed; she is publicly repudiated and sent home. Later, she is recalled and reunited with her children and her husband. She bears all these tests patiently and uncomplainingly. (211)

Bronfman observes that four versions of the story were published between c. 1559 and 1619 – two plays, a ballad and a prose chapbook. Of these, the chapbook in particular, presents Griselda as a model for wives.<sup>77</sup> The author 'is intent upon persuading women to imitate Griselda's behaviour, and thus he shows that everyone, from the lowliest peasant to the highest courtier, admires her' (Bronfman 220). The chapbook does not accept the marquis's explanation to Griselda that his people object to her humble origins. Rather, the messenger who has been sent to take her child expresses his unwillingness and remarks on how respected she is (Bronfman 220). Furthermore, the people roar when she is banished from the court. On her

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<sup>77</sup> Bronfman 219. The Ancient True and Admirable History of Patient Grisel (1619). There are nine extant editions of this tract, the last dating to about 1800 (Bronfman 222).

recall to the court, even strangers seeing her conduct regard her as virtuous and honourable, being extremely impressed by her patience. The author indicates the desirability of imitating Griselda by addressing his women readers at two critical points in the story – when her child is confiscated and when she is banished. In the first instance, he criticises women who inform their husbands that they will do as they please. In the second case, he complains about women who show superiority and desire liberty, and states grievances, such as a woman going outdoors without seeking permission. By contrast, Griselda is represented as exemplary. The narrative of her banishment emphasises her equanimity. The marquis praises her highly in his final speech to her at the court (Bronfman 221-2). In Bronfman's view, 'This author, with all the skill and verbosity at his command, has striven mightily to make Griselda a model for all wives' (222). However, Griselda is an extreme version of the subservient woman, and the publications about her were not extensive.

This section has shown that early modern literature emphasises the subservient model for women, although even conduct books allow for evasion of this and some women are recorded as showing such evasion. The case of Mrs Ratcliffe is particularly relevant when considering Ruth since in his discourse on her, Ley invokes Ruth. Although Ratcliffe's similarity to Ruth in terms of virtue is emphasised, Lake demonstrates that Ratcliffe, on a number of occasions, was enabled by her piety to deviate from conventional conduct. The next section demonstrates that Ruth also provides a precedent for independent and resourceful conduct by women. She even causes the early modern commentators to express disapproval of her actions.



## 6. **RUTH AND THE ‘PROBLEM’ OF EXEMPLARITY**

The evaluation of the conduct of the women in Ruth is developed by the three successive early modern commentators on the book. They are therefore discussed together here, with an emphasis on Bernard as the latest of the three and the author of the commentary edited here. It will be seen that, in analysing the women’s conduct, the commentators endeavour to build up models of Naomi and Ruth as ideal women. Naomi is portrayed as an exemplary pious mother figure, and Ruth as an exemplary dutiful and obedient daughter figure. To a large extent, they are commended regarding their conformity to the dominant, conventional subservient model of womanhood. However, it will be shown that, from the very beginning, the women challenge the assumptions of the commentators, who are compelled tacitly to recognise their qualities of resourcefulness and initiative in chapter 1. Here, other models of womanhood than the subservient one must be invoked to describe their conduct. This represents a challenge to the stereotype of women’s subservience. When it comes to chapter 2, the commentators are considerably alarmed at Ruth’s venturing out to glean, and here they express reservations about her conduct. This anxiety is minor, however, in comparison with that caused by the conduct of Naomi and Ruth in chapter 3, when Ruth, following her mother-in-law’s advice, approached Boaz alone at night and requested marriage. The commentators simply cannot approve of this. That is, the Book of Ruth poses a ‘problem’ of exemplarity for them.

## 6.1. RUTH CHAPTER 1

In chapter 1 the three commentators have no difficulty in representing the women as exemplary. Lavater, in his first sermon, describes Ruth as ‘a most excellent woman’ (Lavater 1r). Furthermore, in expounding Ruth 1.6-9, he explains that Naomi’s comment that Ruth and Orpah were merciful to the dead referred in part to the fact that ‘they did love theyr husbandes when they were alive, and they did serve them withall kinde of honest dueties so farre as it became honest wives’ (Lavater 26r). Topsell, in expounding Ruth 1.9, specifies the duties of women in families. They should be peaceable and, like vines from which come wine, they should ‘rejoyce their husbands and families’ (Topsell 40). The husband is to remember that he is the head when listening to his wife’s advice, and may follow or reject it (Topsell 40). This view of wives’ roles expresses the subservient ideal, and Topsell evidently interprets Naomi’s prayer for rest for her daughters-in-law in verse 9 to mean that she recognises that they would be good wives according to this ideal. Topsell more than once describes Naomi as ‘this godly Naomi’ in his exposition of her dissuasion of her daughters-in-law from accompanying her in her return to Judah (35, 45). He particularly considers her endeavour to bear her affliction. With reference to Naomi’s saying that the hand of the Lord is against her in Ruth 1.13, he comments:

In those wordes she gathereth patience for the remedy of her own grieffe, & sheweth howsoever she is afflicted, yet she is not ignorant, that as the showers come from the cloudes, so her afflictions from the Lord [. . .] her weakenes is her sorrow, her comfort, that God with whom is mercy hath wounded her heart. (48)

Topsell's emphasis here on Naomi's pious summoning up of her patience is entirely in accordance with the subservient model of womanhood. However, in expounding Naomi's recognition that God has dealt very bitterly with her Ruth 1.20, he modifies this expectation, indicating that it is permissible to express resentment at suffering to God:

[B]y this wee note, what God his children thinke of their suffering, which Naomi setteth out by this worde *Bitternesse*, for bitternesse of all other tastes doth most dull the sense, and corrupt the stomacke, so that they account their afflictions as sharpe to them as to anie, and may as lawfully complaine of them unto the Lord. (81)

Naomi, here too exemplifies the godly individual behaving appropriately in affliction, even if not entirely passive. Topsell depicts a number of other individuals exemplifying the unpalatability of affliction in this exposition, such as Job. Of these, the only woman is Hannah, and she is only named (Topsell 82-3). This suggests that he regards Naomi as an amply sufficient model for women reacting to the strain of affliction. Topsell's interpretation of Naomi's bearing of her affliction here is not the only interpretation regarding this affliction he makes. He and Lavater and Bernard also comment on Naomi's resilience and independence given that she was afflicted. This will be noted below amongst the perceptions of the commentators that in aspects of the women's conduct in chapter 1 they displayed boldness.

Bernard at the outset describes Ruth as 'the vertuous and godly young woman and widow' (1). Moreover, Naomi is commended as a model good woman with reference to the mentioning of her name in Ruth 1.2:

Shee was faire, a wise woman, of great note in the Citie, and a very godly and meeke-spirited woman, full of true love, patient in want, thankfull and humble: all which to be true, her words and deedes in this historie doe plainly shewe: So she was faire inward and. outward; an example and Looking-glasse for women (RR 15).

Here, Bernard represents Naomi as possessing characteristics advocated in early modern conduct books. In order to establish her 'ideal' character, he claims that her words and deeds in the story attest to this character. However, in doing so, he omits any reference to his condemnation of her conduct in chapter 3.

Bernard approves Naomi's silence in the early part of the story in his exposition of Ruth 1.8 (43). He later notes, with reference to Ruth 1.10, that Ruth and Orpah are not reported to have spoken to Naomi before this point and that they spoke now out of necessity. He again commends silence in women. They should only speak when necessary and wisely, with restraint (RR 56). Bernard's emphasis on silence is consistent with the subservient model of women's behaviour. As has been seen, silence is enjoined on women by the conduct book writers addressing the bourgeoisie, notably Bruto (as translated by Salter) and Brathwait, following Vives. According to Jones, 'English marriage manuals monitor women's speech indoors and out, on the assumption that natural female garrulity must be carefully controlled in the interests of the domestic unit.' (A. Jones, 'Nets' 59). Bernard is a forceful follower of this tradition. It may further be noted that Bernard makes more observations regarding the women's exemplary conventionality. In his exposition of Ruth 1.8, he emphasises that Christian women should endeavour to be good wives like Ruth and Orpah. This passage has been discussed above regarding companionship in marriage. Moreover, Bernard, like Topsell, interprets Naomi's declaration in verse 13 that the hand of the Lord has gone out against her in conventional terms. He draws attention to Naomi's exemplary humility in blaming herself (72).

The commentators could not interpret all the women's actions as showing subservience, however. They also had to acknowledge that they were often bold in ways which gave no grounds for criticism. Imitation of their actions by early modern women would have involved negotiation with the considerable patriarchal constraints of early modern society. The commentators are compelled to acknowledge that such actions are praiseworthy. In their discussions of the events outlined in Ruth chapter 1, all three commentators indicate without censure that the piety of Naomi and Ruth enabled many of their bold actions. This underlines the validity of Peter Lake's argument concerning Jane Ratcliffe outlined in the previous section. Topsell also alludes to Orpah's being enabled to act boldly by her piety, and Bernard can be seen to suggest this too. The following discussion will focus on how the commentators perceive the women's various kinds of boldness to be enabled by their piety. The commentators' acknowledgement of this enabling represents a modification of the model of subservient womanhood, which could potentially lead women readers to act boldly provided the boldness could be presented as pious.

In particular, the women's aspiration to return to Bethlehem is perceived by the commentators to be both pious and courageous. The commentators' recognition of the women's degree of attainment of this aspiration provides additional encouragement for early modern women to achieve their goals if they can be justified by piety. Bernard's exposition, in particular, also suggests that Naomi shows a distinctive sort of boldness enabled by piety, although it will be seen that this piety is imposed on her by the early modern commentator. The boldness referred to here was in the manner of her dissuasion of her daughters-in-law from accompanying her to Judah. The biblical text might suggest that there was no great harm in Ruth and

Orpah returning to their Moabite families. Naomi, after all, hoped that the Lord would deal kindly with them as they had dealt kindly with her and her sons (Ruth 1.8). In fact, Topsell and Bernard to some extent do represent Naomi as putting off Ruth and Orpah out of concern for their temporal welfare. However, the commentators were also influenced in their interpretation by their own theological concern for salvation. They would have seen Naomi's leaving behind Ruth and Orpah in a heathen country as denying them salvation. Therefore, they made another interpretation, that Naomi was making a trial of the faith of her daughters-in-law, giving them the chance to prove themselves, but also with a view to ensuring that no unworthy person was admitted to the religious community. The idea, elaborated by Bernard, that Naomi was engaged in rigorous testing was consistent with orthodoxy, but not with the ethos of conduct books. A parallel can be seen with Katherine Stubs defending her religion against papists and atheists.

The commentators emphasise Ruth and Orpah's piety in the early stages of the story, and in doing so they coincide with preceding medieval Jewish commentators especially.<sup>78</sup> In expounding Ruth 1.14-15, verses which concern Orpah's departure, Lavater observes that Orpah very probably had 'some taste of true religion' (36r). Moreover, in his exposition of Ruth's declaration of faith in Ruth 1.16 he declares of

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<sup>78</sup> The medieval Jewish commentaries make a number of allusions to the religious instruction of Ruth and Orpah in Moab. Salmon ben Yeroham claims that Orpah worshipped God when her husband was alive (BJE 48). The Anonymous Rabbi claims that Ruth and Orpah had been converted to Judaism when married to Mahlon and Chilion. (BJE 117-118) Abraham ibn Ezra maintains that Ruth and Orpah had been converted to Judaism before marrying Mahlon and Chilion (BJE 136, 137). David Qimhi similarly comments that the Moabite women whom Mahlon and Chilion married had been converted to Judaism (BJE 149). The medieval Christian commentaries make a little comment on the piety of Ruth in the early stages of the story. A Gloss addition by Theoderet notes Ruth's piety as a reason for her sticking by Naomi (MET 32). Moreover, Nicholas of Lyra observes that the occasion of Ruth's conversion to Judaism was her marriage to one of Elimelech's sons (MET 57). However, Nicholas may simply mean that Ruth therefore became acquainted with Naomi. The medieval Jewish perceptions in particular that the young women were pious in Jewish terms provide a basis for the early modern commentators to develop an interpretation, as noted by Theoderet, of how their piety gave rise to their actions.

her that ‘without doubt she had learned of her father in law, of her mother in lawe, and husband, and especially by the inspiration of the holy Ghost: the God of Israell to be the true God’ (42r). Topsell, in expounding Ruth 1.10, in which Ruth and Orpah refuse to return, alludes to Naomi’s ‘godly & wise conversation’ with them in Moab (41). He claims more than once, for example, in his exposition of Ruth 1.16, that Ruth received religious instruction from Naomi (64-5). Bernard suggests a few times that Ruth and Orpah may have received religious instruction.<sup>79</sup>

The commentators connect in similar ways the pieties of Naomi and Ruth with their bold endeavour of travelling to Bethlehem. Lavater, in commenting on Ruth 1.3-5, in which the deaths of Elimelech and then his sons are related, draws attention to Naomi’s resilience in her affliction, a prerequisite for her resolve to return to Bethlehem: ‘And sith NAOMI being compassed with many evils, did not despaire: wee also being cast of God into greevous troubles and miseries, let us not dispaire or accuse him.’ (21v-22r). This perception of Naomi’s resilience in affliction is not contrary to the perception, mentioned above, that she submitted herself to God’s chastisement. However, Lavater’s subsequent discussion of the factors which might have made her despair suggests that she showed boldness in overcoming them. He enumerates her troubles. Besides being apparently destitute of aid from men she was in poverty. She was also old. In addition, she was a stranger in Moab. Moreover, she may have regretted going to Moab against God’s will<sup>80</sup> (22r-22v). Nevertheless, Lavater insists, she did not despair. And he attributes her fortitude to her religious consolation: ‘[F]or all these heapes of troubles, NAOMI did not dispaire, for shee

<sup>79</sup> For example, on p. 63, where he takes Naomi’s allusion in Ruth 1.11 to the levirate law to indicate that the women were taught by Naomi and her sons the law of God and Jewish practice.

<sup>80</sup> Lavater’s recognition of the view that Naomi was to blame for going to Moab is echoed by Bernard. See *RR* 118, 120. Bernard’s position here is changed from his earlier conclusion that Naomi and her children were not necessarily at fault (p. 13).

knewe that this is the lotte of the saintes in this world, that they are exercised with many and great afflictions.’ (22v) In the next sermon, discussing Ruth 1.6-7, Lavater praises as exemplary Naomi’s religiously motivated, resolute action of fulfilling her objective of leaving Moab: ‘But here is a notable example to be followed of NAOMIE. For she by and by assoone as the famine ceased, went out of the idolatrous nation to the people of God, as if it were to a haven: so let us also as often as occasion is offred flie to that place, where we may serve God with a pure conscience’ (24r).

By connecting Ruth’s piety with her bold resolution to accompany Naomi to Bethlehem, Lavater makes Ruth appear comparable to Naomi. He is particularly struck by Ruth’s resistance to Naomi’s attempts to dissuade her as well as Orpah from making the journey to Bethlehem. Commenting on her famous speech expressing her adherence to Naomi in his sermon on Ruth 16-18, Lavater observes: ‘RUTH coulde not be perswaded by any meanes to leave her mother in law: but as hot lime wherupon colde water is poured, shee by disswasion becomes more earnest and forward’ (40r). He draws attention to the fact that Ruth, in this speech, embraced the Israelite religion. Lavater’s belief that she was earlier instructed in religion by her relatives by marriage could well indicate that he sees her ardour and commitment, contrary to stereotypes of female passivity, as resulting from her pre-existing piety. To Lavater, Ruth resembles Abraham in her following of her faith:

ABRAHAMS fayth is commended, who being called of God into a straunge land neglected all thinges, and followed him without delay, she doth shew indeede that shee was the daughter of ABRAHAM. For she had rather live in other nations for the truth then to live in her own countrie. (66r)



Abraham, being called by God showed manly bravery; and this was true of Ruth also, even though she was a woman.

Topsell further develops Lavater's indication that Ruth and Naomi's piety justified their bold objective of travelling from Moab. He points out that Naomi's piety made it possible for her to aspire to undertake the journey to distant Bethlehem, despite the hindrances of her age and her leaving behind her, in his view, wealth in Moab (33). Topsell does not only note Naomi's ambition to travel, but also derives from her dissuasion of her daughters-in-law accompanying her her piously authorised willingness to travel alone.<sup>81</sup> He emphasises this willingness to travel alone in his exposition of Naomi's advice to her daughters-in-law to return each to her own mother's house in Ruth 1.8. Topsell constructs a speech by Naomi to Ruth and Orpah in which she advises them to turn back:

Be advised my daughters, some will thinke you very unnaturall, that you forsake your owne mothers, to go with me your mother in lawe, & forsake your owne country to go unto a strange place: the journey is long & tedious, you are tender & weak, better returne before we be far gone: to be wise too late, is to repent too sone, care not for me, the Lord wil inable me to go as well alone as with your company. (35)

The initial warning that Naomi's daughters-in-law would be thought unnatural if they left their own mothers and country is a more strongly expressed dissuasion than is to be found in Ruth 1.8 in the Bible. Topsell represents Naomi as being extremely forceful, even reinforcing this argument by claiming that Ruth and Orpah are not strong enough to undertake the journey. The claim concluding the speech, that God will enable Naomi to travel alone, indicates that her piety empowers her. It also implies that Naomi does not take into consideration the fates of Ruth and Orpah

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<sup>81</sup> This would be a questionable thing for a woman in the early modern period to do, as Topsell himself notes in the commentary (150-1).

should she succeed in dissuading them. It is only later in his treatment of the story that Topsell engages with the issue of the salvation of Ruth and Orpah, of great concern to the early modern reader. Lavater, in particular, will be seen to condemn such a preoccupation with only the temporal welfare of Ruth and Orpah. But Topsell's strategy at this point is directed to emphasising that Naomi was prepared to be independent.

Topsell's constructing a speech by Naomi in this instance can be seen as an example of what Elizabeth D. Harvey terms ventriloquism. According to Harvey, certain classical and Renaissance texts written by men 'are voiced by female characters in a way that seems either to erase the gender of the authorial voice or to thematize the transvestism of this process' (1). In this instance, Topsell having departed from his usual mode of analytical exposition, elaborates a speech which he evidently imagines a woman might make to other women. It is not simply a paraphrase, but consists of an argument which is clearly meant to be accepted as the voice of a woman, rather than as an expression of Topsell's own views. Harvey maintains that 'the representations of feminine speech that were current in literary and popular accounts, as well as in ventriloquizations, fostered a vision that tended to reinforce women's silence or to marginalize their voices when they did speak or write' (5). The further discussion of ventriloquization, in particular, Topsell's ventriloquization of Naomi, which follows, supports this perception.

Harvey draws attention in a footnote to Gail Reitenbach's essay, "'Maydes are simple, some men say': Thomas Campion's Female Persona Poems' (1990), which, Harvey claims, breaks new ground in addressing the inconsistency between gender

and voice in ‘non-dramatic Renaissance poetry’ (Harvey 143,<sup>82</sup> 3). Harvey describes Campion’s poems as ventriloquized. A consideration of Reitenbach’s essay provides a context, in this case relating to poetry, for further analysing Topsell’s ventriloquization of Naomi. Reitenbach discusses several poems by Campion for female speakers. She points out that, contrary to Barbara Bloy’s conclusions about poetic female personae in the period, Campion’s women are complex and ‘frequently use the language and imagery of male personae – to ironic ends’ (Reitenbach 82). According to Reitenbach, ‘[t]heir diverse characters – from innocent and canny young maids to remorseful, vindictive, amorous, and ironic women – belie the “simple” way men (and poetic commonplaces) portray them’ (92). Reitenbach draws attention to how Campion’s poems express irony against society’s sexual double standard (91). Despite this championing of women, Harvey’s view that ventriloquism as used in the early modern period is a means of silencing by speaking on another’s behalf (142) can be seen to be true of Campion’s work in so far as he expresses concepts which he considers women to be incapable of formulating. Campion’s realism in portraying his female speakers has been attributed to his having lost his parents early and to his work as a physician, which might also have caused him to make diverse psychological observations, accounting for his versatility (Reitenbach 92). Topsell might similarly have applied his experience of his female parishioners to his ventriloquising of Naomi. This might also apply to Bernard’s ventriloquism of Ruth which will be mentioned below.

The speech Topsell suggests Naomi might have given emphasises a tone of motherliness and concern for her daughters-in-law. She addresses them, ‘my

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<sup>82</sup> Footnote 1.

daughters', and, as Topsell evidently imagines a mother would, she points out what others might think of their action of accompanying her (Topsell 35). Her belittling of their strength and assertion of her own, given God's assistance, emphasises her greater resilience as a mother figure. It can be concluded that Topsell's ventriloquization of Naomi serves to construct and outline the role of a mother. This interpretation is consistent with the fact that Topsell goes on to assert that Naomi provides 'a most godly example of mother-like love and godly charitie' (Topsell 35). Topsell can be seen to be substituting his own view of motherhood for the simpler impression that is conveyed by the biblical text.

Topsell goes on to underline the seriousness of the situation Naomi was prepared to put herself in as a consequence of dissuading Ruth and Orpah. '[I]f Naomi had gone alone, it could not chuse but be farre more dangerous then with company, and none could receive any disadvantage by her counsel beside her selfe' (35). Topsell's emphasis on Naomi's interest in the temporal welfare of her daughters-in-law conceals how journeying alone might have led to a benefit for her. That is, she would have, in a far from passive manner, engineered a situation in which she could pursue her ends unhindered by foreign daughters-in-law who might have been out of place in her homeland.<sup>83</sup> Such a possibility does seem to have crossed Topsell's mind, for subsequently he feels the need to declare that Naomi was concerned that her daughters-in-law did not think that she did not care for them and wanted to be rid of them since they were a troublesome burden (Topsell 46-7). At

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<sup>83</sup> In his exposition of verse 6, Topsell draws attention to the fact (contrary to Lavater's interpretation that some of the Bethlehemites may have scorned Naomi, 45r-47r) that Naomi could expect comfort from her old acquaintance on her return to Bethlehem (27). He may have concluded that Ruth and Orpah might be expected not to fit in with this reunion.

this point, the salvation of Ruth and Orpah is an issue, and Topsell's recognition of Naomi's independence is subordinate to this.

Regarding Orpah, Topsell argues, at the point when she was about to return home, that her example demonstrates 'howe farre an hypocrite or an infidell may goe in Religion.' He adds:

Horpah forsaketh her owne people, for the love of God his people, she weepeth and cryeth, when it is but mentioned unto her that shee woulde departe, shee travaileth on the way towards the countrey of God his people (52).

According to Topsell, Orpah's piety emboldened her sufficiently to enable her to leave her people, persist in the face of Naomi's opposition, and travel towards the land of Judah. Ultimately, however 'for a fewe worldly reasons, she turneth backe againe, though as it may seeme with a bitter heart' (Topsell 52). Topsell, in suggesting that Orpah was bitter on account of leaving Naomi and Ruth, indicates that there was comradeship between the women, as well as the prospect of a life in Judah, which Orpah had shared up to this point. These were the goals which the women individually sought to attain contrary to the passivity enjoined on early modern women. Ruth provides a more powerful illustration of empowerment by piety, represented by Topsell at this point in terms of her overcoming Naomi's trying of her faith: '[S]he [Naomi] trieth, molesteth, & vexeth her; yet by the saving grace of God his assisting spirit, in the end she acquiteth her selfe, like a woman of strength in the Lords quarrel' (59).

Bernard, like Lavater and Topsell, sees Naomi and Ruth, in particular, as being emboldened by their piety in chapter 1. With reference to Ruth 1.7 he lists factors which might have discouraged Naomi from making the journey back to Judah, as Topsell did. She was old and had poor company, the journey was long for her, and

her estate was wasted, a misfortune which some people might say she deserved for leaving Judah for the idolatrous country of Moab. He declares that, nevertheless, ‘all these things did not withhold her from her godly purpose. And two reasons may be given for this; the love of her owne Countrey, and her piety, esteeming highly of the means of salvation’ (40).

For Bernard too, even Orpah illustrates the connection between boldness and piety. She made a good beginning, he says while expounding verse 14, but she never wholeheartedly embraced the truth, and so eventually deserted it. He attributes her fair start to, amongst other causes, ‘the working of the Word, moving the heart in some sort, to intertaine it’ (76). In the case of Orpah, following the truth meant leaving her country, parents and friends, which required boldness, although she did not persevere. Bernard’s perception of Ruth’s empowerment by her piety is evident in part of the paraphrase he makes of her words in Ruth 1.16: ‘I have tasted by thee of true Religion, the power whereof and thy vertues so bind me, as I can leave all, countrey, kindred, and friends, and old acquaintance, to follow thee, my mother’ (88). Here Bernard’s ventriloquizing Ruth serves the function of suggesting Ruth’s thought processes as she formulates her famous speech beginning in Ruth 1.16. Bernard is perhaps applying to Ruth the knowledge of women’s psychology which he has learned as a clergyman.

Bernard, especially, portrays Naomi, in urging her daughters-in-law to return to Moab, as subjecting them to a rigorous religious test. This interpretation represents Naomi as acting boldly in performing this testing and being empowered to do so by her piety. The interpretation that Naomi was applying a test removes the problem raised for the Christian commentators by Naomi’s putting Ruth and Orpah off, that

they would not be saved. It is worth noting that the medieval Christian commentator, Hugh of St. Cher sets out this problem clearly. He comments on Ruth 1.15 that Naomi seemed to sin in advising Ruth to adhere to idolatry. His solution in his literal sense is that either Naomi was testing Ruth, or that she was only giving permission since she could not compel her (MET 43). The three early modern Ruth commentators all, to a greater or lesser degree, adopt the testing interpretation. Testing would protect the religious community from being damaged by the hypocrisy or lapsing of the convert (see, especially, Topsell 73-4, RR 45-6, 101-2) but would also allow that the individual might be converted. In expounding Ruth 1.10-13, Lavater expresses his concern about Ruth and Orpah's salvation: 'Was it not profitable, that they shoulde be brought from idolatrie to true Religion: as if it were to be delivered out of burning fire?' (31r) He claims that Naomi hoped for their conversion but showed her wisdom in trying their faith (31r). However, he observes, if she rather dissuaded them because they belonged more with their acquaintances than with strangers, she sinned (33r). His doubt is evident in his pulling himself up from speculating about the fate of Orpah after her departure in his exposition of Ruth 1.14-15:

If this ORPAH had come into Judea, it doth not seem that she would have persevered. But whether she perished in her errors, or was afterwarde converted or repented without the losse of the trueth we know not: neither should there concerning this or of others such like be anie questions mooved which tend not to edification. (36v)

Topsell engages with the issue of Ruth and Orpah's salvation in Naomi's ventriloquized speech which is developed from Ruth 1.13, although Topsell modifies the biblical words in this verse in that he represents Naomi as saying that she was

more grieved for their sake than for her own. According to Topsell, Naomi continues:

[T]he death of my husband & losse of my children grieve me, but not so much as this, that now either I must departe from you, or else with your companie indanger your safetie, I coulde not but sorrowe for the dead, yet I am more grieved for you poore destitute widowes: I have lost their companie for a while, til I meet them againe in God his kingdome, but now we depart, I to the Lords people, & you to Infidels, and wee shall bee separated for ever. Would God that I coulde so promise you prosperitie with mee, that so you might receive the peace of your soules.  
(Topsell 47)

According to Topsell, this speech expresses Naomi's care for her daughters-in-law so that they would not think she found them a troublesome burden (as has been commented on above). Topsell makes Naomi address the concern he himself is preoccupied with; that is, he sees her as warning Ruth and Orpah about the prospect of their damnation should they choose to return home. Her observation that should they accompany her they would be in danger would then constitute a trial of their faith. Whilst Topsell does not definitely adopt the interpretation that Naomi was testing Ruth and Orpah at this stage in his exposition (as he goes on to depict Naomi as concerned with the temporal welfare of her daughters-in-law (47)) nevertheless, he later does argue that Naomi was testing her daughters-in-law. In expounding Ruth 1.18 he states: 'Naomi in the beginning dealt very wisely, in the triall of her daughters before they were too farre gone' (72).

As for Bernard, he sets out the testing interpretation very strongly at the outset. Naomi 'weighing afore-hand all circumstances, beginneth to make triall of the soundnesse of their love, and to know upon what ground it standeth, as appeareth out of the verses 11, 12, 13' (43). Although he does on occasion interpret Naomi's



arguments as pertaining to the temporal welfare of Ruth and Orpah,<sup>84</sup> the testing interpretation predominates. Bernard feels compelled to deny that Naomi acted in carelessness of Ruth's and Orpah's souls (44, 45). He also explicitly declares later, in expounding Ruth 1.15, that Naomi must have been trying Ruth since she could not have wanted Ruth to return to idols rather than turning to God (79).

Bernard develops an extended analysis of Naomi's sustained rigorous argument. His analysis of her rigour is preceded in certain works interpreting the Book of Ruth<sup>85</sup> which adopt a particular device; that is, a dialogue between Naomi and Ruth, similar in the various works but showing some variations, in which Naomi enumerates a series of commands binding on Jews which Ruth accepts in verses 16-17.<sup>86</sup> According to the medieval Jewish commentator Rashi, this dialogue is the basis of the Jewish tradition of informing a prospective proselyte of various penalties so that he can choose to retract (BJE 104). The dialogue indicates Naomi's religious rigour in constructing this test of Ruth as well as Ruth's piety and determination in not being deterred. As already indicated, Lavater and Topsell do not greatly elaborate the rigour of Naomi's arguments; however, their precedent in invoking the testing interpretation provides Bernard with a model to develop.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Bernard, like Topsell, may put forward this interpretation sometimes because he is particularly impressed with the acts of kindness done by one individual for another, which are a theme of Ruth. At the least, Bernard would appear to indicate his indebtedness to Topsell. Bernard makes this interpretation that Naomi was addressing the temporal needs of Ruth and Orpah quite definitely in his exposition of verse 13. This can be seen particularly in his deriving the doctrine that '*A godly and wise mother in law, like Naomi, cannot onely be willing, but also will perswade her children in law should marry againe.*' (70) Such marriages by Ruth and Orpah, evidently to Moabites, would have entailed their abandoning their efforts to undergo religious conversion, but are here clearly commended as a desirable course of action rather than being represented as being proposed as a test.

<sup>85</sup> The Targum, verses 16 to 17, and certain Jewish and Christian medieval commentaries.

<sup>86</sup> See BTR 20-1; BJE 104 (Rashi); BJE 118 (Anonymous Rabbi); MET 32 (Chaldaeus Paraphrastes); MET 59 (Nicholas of Lyra).

<sup>87</sup> Lavater and Topsell only draw attention to the rigour of Naomi's argument in testing Ruth's faith in Ruth 1.15 after Orpah's departure, when they comment on the power of Orpah's example, propounded to Ruth by Naomi. Lavater recognises that Naomi's telling Ruth to follow Orpah who has returned to her people and her gods 'was a great temptation to RUTH'. (Lavater 38v.) Topsell likewise observes:

Some indication of Bernard's depiction of Naomi's arguments serves to demonstrate what he finds significant about this form of boldness grounded in piety. Regarding Naomi's instruction to Ruth and Orpah in verse 8 to return each to her mother's house, he states:

Here is an argument to move them to returne backe, because they had naturall parents alive, and shee but a mother in law. Shee trieth them with this first, to see whether nature wrought more then grace. This she knew to be a strong pull-backe, and that nature must first be subdued to follow soundly the course of godlinesse. (46)

In Bernard's representation Naomi makes a powerful opening testing argument. This is based on her perception of the strength of affinity between parents and children as a barrier to the family separation which enables the pursuit of godliness: she insists that Ruth and Orpah pay attention to the parental bond.

Commenting on verse 11, Bernard sees Naomi as making a second trial of her daughters in law despite their passion and resolution because she realised that a thorough trial is not performed in one attempt. (59). In doing so he further portrays her as rigorous and persevering in her endeavour. In expounding Naomi's question in this verse, '*Why will you goe with mee?*', Bernard ventriloquizes Naomi:

I love you, as a mother her daughters, therefore I advise you to consider seriously of your resolution aforehand, and weigh with your selves, what may so lead you; for I can see no reason in worldly respects (for such onely shee urged both heere and in the verses following) why you should go with mee. (61)

It is striking that in the parenthetical observation in this ventriloquization of the maternal concern of Naomi, Bernard draws attention to the fact that Naomi only talked about the worldly welfare of Ruth and Orpah. This implies, according to

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<sup>1</sup>[S]urely this was a greater discouragement unto her then any she had yet, namely; that her sister being departed, shee should lay before her her sisters example to drawe her likewise to fall.' (Topsell 55).

Bernard's theological framework, that she might also have given them spiritual advice and the fact that she did not made the test more rigorous.

Bernard's interest in Naomi's dissuasion would appear to be that he sees her strategies as being instructive for the testing of individuals wishing to come into the church in the early modern period.<sup>88</sup> His concern with this issue reflects his interest in catechizing. Topsell also draws attention, in connection with Naomi's testing of Ruth, to testing newcomers to the church, and Lavater mentions, in his sermon on Ruth 1.10-13, men embracing and then deserting the Gospel to the offence of others in his time (Topsell 72-5; Lavater 31r-31v). Bernard's treatment of Naomi's dissuasion is more thorough than Lavater's and Topsell's, reflecting the more detailed nature of his commentary.

## 6.2. RUTH CHAPTER 2

Ruth's gleaning in Ruth chapter 2 gives rise to a mixed reaction on the part of the commentators, for while it gives scope for praise of her humility and obedience there are also questions raised about risks to her chastity. This concern is also found in the Targum and certain medieval Jewish commentaries,<sup>89</sup> but in the early modern

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<sup>88</sup> Bernard draws attention in the commentary to the need to test newcomers to the church on pp. 36, 45-6, 101-2

<sup>89</sup> The translation of Boaz's words in 2.9 of the Targum states the question, has he not commanded the young men not to molest Ruth (BTR 23). Also, the translation of 2.22 of the Targum states that Naomi told Ruth that it was good that she should go out with Boaz's girls, so that she will not be molested in another field (BTR 25). The sexual connotation of 'molest' is evident in the commentary by the medieval Jew, the Anonymous Rabbi. The Anonymous Rabbi, in expounding 2.8, represents Boaz as saying to Ruth that she was not to glean in another field so she would not be molested in another field, it being disgraceful and abhorrent if a woman were to be molested by young men. Furthermore, he represents Boaz as telling Ruth to stay near his young women and commanding his young men not to touch her, in case she thought that his young men might molest her. At this point, the Anonymous Rabbi observes that similarly Naomi told her that it was good that she should go out with Boaz's young women, so that she would not be molested in another field (BJE 122). The medieval Jewish commentator Abraham ibn Ezra makes the converse argument to sexual threat to

period, it reflects the preoccupation with women's chastity which we have seen to loom in the minds of the men writing conduct literature. Ann Rosalind Jones draws attention to the perception of conduct book writers in the early modern period that any woman's venturing away from home entails a risk to her chastity. According to Jones, conduct books 'make no attempt to balance the desirability and the dangers of women's entry into the public world: they forbid it'. She adds that their advice 'has a single focus, the chastity of the wife' (A. Jones, 'Nets' 52). For the early modern commentators on Ruth, Ruth's going out to glean may have had admirable aspects, but it also caused them to express reservations, as it could not be entirely assimilated into a model of ideal conduct. In his exposition of Ruth 2.1-3, Lavater observes that Ruth is exemplary in asking Naomi's permission to glean even though it was lawful for strangers and widows to do so: 'Daughters in law may learn by this example, how to esteeme their mothers in law, and how to honour them.' (51r) He indicates that this is really an instance of filial obedience: 'The commaundement of the Lord. *Thou shalt honor thy parentes*: doth comprehend both mothers in lawe and fathers in law.' (51r) Naomi's courtesy in giving permission is also commendable. However, Lavater sees sexual dangers in Ruth's enterprise:

It is profitable and comely for straunge widowes (especially if they be yong and bewtiful) to keep themselves at home, and not to go alone, nor wander into the streetes, least they be suspected for unhonest, or be ravished as wee may read of DINAH the daughter of JACOB.  
(52r)

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Ruth when, expounding 2.7, he explains that Ruth dealt only with her needs so that she would not be distrusted because of her beauty (BJE 139). However, he too points out the sexual threat to Ruth in using the word 'molest', in the lemma of 2.22 which he renders: 'That they may not molest you'. He comments that the subject is 'men', and observes that there are many examples of this, probably referring to molestation (BJE 140-1).

The medieval Jewish commentator, Salmon ben Yeroham makes a different interpretation of the threat to Ruth, which he describes as harm (BJE 63 [verse 2.9], 64 [verse 2.9], 70 [verse 2.22]). Topsell makes a similar interpretation, that injury may be done to Ruth, and Bernard follows this interpretation to some degree.

It is clear that he cannot accept Ruth's exposing herself to sexual danger as consistent with ideal womanly conduct. Nevertheless, he acknowledges her initiative in seeking work to sustain herself and Naomi in a time of want: 'Necessitie which is the extreemest and greatest dart, constrained her to go out of her house, that she might get her owne living, and her mother in lawes.' (52r) Lavater subsequently exhorts godly women 'to follow this notable example of labor and humilitie.' (52v) In recognising Ruth's initiative, Lavater tacitly accepts an element of enterprise in the model of the ideal woman which he delineates in the commentary.

Lavater's anxiety concerning threats to Ruth, including molestation, resulting from the situation she has put herself in, reappears in his exposition of Ruth 2.8-10. Here he observes that Boaz instructed Ruth not to leave where she was but to stay with his young women 'partly least shee should have any wrong being alone in any of his grounds, from the which his servaunts might easily defend her' (60r). Furthermore, Boaz protected her against the servants themselves, who might molest her:

In harvest and vintage great libertie or rather licence is given to workemen, for the ease of their labours, but sometime they doe abuse theyr libertie, they doe handle many shamefast and chaste virgines very filthily, and doe many thinges insolently: his servantes might have done the same, therefore hee doth promise her that he wil admonish them that they doe not hurt her. (60v-61r)

Lavater introduces the view that women may be to blame for sexual immorality when he points out the duty of householders to prevent women, both those in their charge and others, from being provoked to lewdness and warn them against whoredom. This, Lavater declares, is especially the case if the householder sees that the women are wanton in that they talk lewdly, accompany suspicious men, or dance (61r).

The dangers of the threshing floor scene in chapter 3, had Boaz not been chaste, are subsequently anticipated: ‘But howe wicked are they who offer their maydens (whose chastity they ought to preserve, and be to them in stead of parentes) to others, or defile them themselves?’ (Lavater 61r-61v)

The danger of Ruth’s enterprise is again emphasised in Lavater’s exposition of Ruth 2.20-23. Lavater claims that Ruth’s wrongly reporting to Naomi that Boaz told her to stay with his servants when he actually told her to go after the maidens was not a discrepancy since ‘the servauntes and the maydes went into the field together’. However, he also reports that some people attribute to Boaz words corresponding to those Ruth told Naomi, and hints at the sexual element in Ruth’s situation: ‘some say that he sayd, Joyne thy selfe with my servauntes, in jeste to try her: Namely that she might get her a husband.’ (87r)<sup>90</sup> In expounding Ruth 2.22, Lavater strikingly applies his view that women may be to blame for sexual immorality to Ruth herself. He derives from one possible translation of Naomi’s words, that someone might provoke Ruth to whoredom in another field (87v). Lavater concludes his observations of Ruth 2.22 in the light of his deriving, from Naomi’s example and St. Paul’s doctrine in the second chapter of his epistle to Titus, the view that young

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<sup>90</sup> The issue of the discrepancy between Ruth’s report of Boaz’s words in Ruth 2.21 and what he said in Ruth 2.8 will be seen to be also touched on by Bernard, although Topsell evades having to make an explanation by amending Ruth’s speech. There is a precedent for interest in this issue in the medieval Jewish commentaries. Salmon ben Yeroham provides the explanation that Boaz did also tell Ruth to stay close to his young men although this is omitted by the writer. Boaz refers (in Ruth 2.9) to male reapers but tells Ruth to go after the young women (BJE 64). Like Topsell, Salmon amends Ruth’s speech in his exposition of Ruth 2.21 to allude to young women (BJE 69). The Anonymous Rabbi explains Ruth’s mention of young men to refer to Boaz’s instruction in Ruth 2.9, which the Anonymous Rabbi interprets as telling Ruth to let her eyes and heart be behind his reapers and to glean after them (BJE 122). Abraham ibn Ezra notes the discrepancy in expounding Naomi’s mention of Ruth’s gleaning with young women in Ruth 2.22. He points out that Naomi did not say young men, but goes on to attempt to justify the discrepancy in Ruth’s report by suggesting that Boaz may have advised Ruth to put herself under the protection of the overseer, that is, one of the young men (BJE 140, 146-7 note 33). The medieval Christian commentaries do not engage with the issue of the discrepancy, perhaps because it is a lexicological point, not of as much interest to them as to the Jewish commentators.

women should be taught by older women to be virtuous and to stay at home (88r-89r). According to Lavater, Naomi was indeed constrained to allow Ruth to go into the fields, but she commanded her to accompany women not men, so young women may have to go away from home but should be exhorted to attach themselves to honest company (88r-88v). Despite this approval of Naomi's advice, Lavater feels compelled to express here his fears that women may err by following the example of Naomi and Ruth in chapter 3. Evidently with chapter 3 in mind, he declares that young women should keep at home especially in the night. He echoes his language in his exposition of chapter 3: 'And let them not onely flee from evill, but also from the outward appearance of evill. For if they fall into the suspition of whoredome or adultery, they cannot easily clear themselves.' (Lavater 88v; 95r, 108r-108v). Lavater again anticipates his treatment of chapter 3 at the end of this discussion, when he disapproves of those who talk with men and go to dances and banquets saying that in this way they may acquire husbands (89r; 95v-96r).

As for Topsell, he does not draw attention to a sexual threat to Ruth as frequently in his exposition of the chapter as Lavater. However, he does indicate some anxiety about Ruth's undertaking from the outset. In expounding Ruth 2.2 he remarks that Ruth is shown to have been careful to avoid hunger and willing to 'adventure her perill' in the honest work of gleaning (94). He evidently admires Ruth's initiative in seeking to earn an honest living but his choice of words suggests that his admiration is anxious and her conduct could even be regarded as reckless. 'Adventure' has the meaning at this time of 'To take the chance of; to commit to fortune; to undertake a thing of doubtful issue; to try, to chance, to venture upon.' (OEDO). 'Peril' reinforces the sense of risk, for its meaning at this time is 'The

position or condition of being imminently exposed to the chance of injury, loss, or destruction; risk, jeopardy, danger.’ (OEDO). Subsequently, in the same exposition, Topsell again draws attention to her initiative: ‘Ruth offered her service, which her mother intreated not’ (97). Consistently with his argument in Ruth chapter 1, he attributes this, besides her willingness to undertake humble labour and her lack of shame about her poverty, to her piety (97). Also in this exposition, Topsell finds Ruth exemplary in asking Naomi’s permission to glean (97).

Topsell interprets Boaz’s charging the servants not to touch Ruth, mentioned in Ruth 2.9, as his warning them against injuring her (as he reads ‘touch’) by discourtesy, and does not allude to sexual misdemeanour. Rather Boaz was commanding them to be friendly (Topsell 111-3). It is not until Topsell expounds verse 22 that sexual danger is mentioned. In his exposition of verses 21 and 22, he switches between the terms ‘servants’ and ‘maidens’ so as to indicate that no significance in terms of threat to Ruth should be attached to the terms Ruth and Boaz used (132, 149, 150, 151). However, in his summary of the verses treated in the sermon, Topsell represents Naomi in verse 22 as advising Ruth to accept Boaz’s offer that she stay with his maidens lest she be denied in another field (132). He expands on this in his later treatment of verse 22, when Naomi is said to advise Ruth thus to avoid all dangers should the reapers deny her in another field (149). ‘Deny’ at this time meant ‘To refuse permission to, not to allow; to forbid (*to do* anything, *the doing* of it).’ (OEDO). Topsell is evidently concerned about the threats to Ruth should she be excluded from the gleaning community. He expresses his fears in terms of sexual danger when he notes that it is dangerous or indecent for women to work without company. He observes that women are conquered quickly, and cites



the case of Dinah. Abigail's taking servants with her when she went to David has, he claims, a bearing the situation of Ruth (150). Topsell, like Lavater, turns to apply these observations to his own time. Firstly, he focuses on the dangers inherent in working alone. He draws attention to servants who are dishonest because of too little company (150). Topsell later states that men should see that their daughters and servants have company in order to prevent dishonest behaviour, should they be disposed to it (150-1). Evidently, like Lavater, he regards women as being in some degree to blame for immoral conduct. Topsell, secondly, derives support from Naomi's need to advise Ruth to go out with Boaz's maidens for his disapproval of mingled company of men and women except when it is necessary (Topsell 151-2).

Coming to Bernard, he follows his predecessors in noting aspects of Ruth's conduct which he finds commendable. First, he notes Ruth's initiative in seeking to glean. Having remarked on the poverty of Naomi and Ruth, he observes: 'now time serving to helpe themselves by labour, *Ruth* bethinketh her selfe what to do in this case'. She did not remonstrate with God, regret leaving Moab or blame Naomi or others, but 'shee resolveth to use her owne labour for her helpe' (RR 132). Later, Bernard points out that Ruth would not venture out into the field without Naomi's permission although she was impelled by necessity and her intention was good and honest. He exhorts children to follow the example of Ruth, who was only a daughter-in-law but showed grace and humility (133). Bernard subsequently notes that Ruth did not scorn the labour of gleaning, although it was humble (134).

But once again we find anxiety about Ruth's gleaning. This is indicated when he follows Topsell's choice of words, that Ruth was willing to 'adventure her perill' in gleaning (Topsell 94). In expounding Ruth's asking Naomi for permission to

glean, Bernard observes that Ruth went ‘at adventure’,<sup>91</sup> although guided by God’s providence (136-7). Furthermore, in expounding Ruth’s going and gleaning in the field in verse 3, he draws attention to her ‘bold adventure, and going forth in such perillous times’ (139). Here, he focuses on her praiseworthy fearlessness although she was a stranger and a young woman, on account of her trust in God and the necessity of earning her living (139)

In his exposition of Ruth 2.8, Bernard endorses Boaz’s advice that women should stay with women because women’s chastity is best preserved in the company of other women, which indicates that he sees Ruth as facing sexual danger in her enterprise of gleaning (RR 162). However, Bernard goes on to point out that not all women are suitable company, and cites the example of Dinah: ‘*Ruth* must keepe with *Boaz* maidens, the servants of a godly man. It is dangerous for a *Dinah* to goe to the daughters of the land’ (163). The importance of a woman’s female company being suitable is pointed out in the conduct literature for women. According to Thomas Salter, the maiden ‘should carefully eschewe the comapanie of acquaintance, especially and before all that of Kitchine Maides, and light gossepes’ (sig. Diiir-sig. Diiiv; see also sig. Biiiiv-sig. Biiiiv, sig. Dvir).

Bernard’s exposition of Boaz speaking in Ruth 2.9 of his charging the young men not to touch Ruth expresses the views of both Lavater and Topsell. Bernard firstly follows Topsell in explaining ‘touch’ in terms of injury (164-5). His reference to the young men quietly suffering Ruth to be among them (165) echoes Topsell’s mention of Boaz telling Ruth that he had charged them quietly to endure her presence (110). This suggests that Bernard was here drawing on Topsell. Bernard

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<sup>91</sup> ‘at adventure’: ‘at hazard, at random, recklessly’. (O.E.D.O).

later amplifies his mention of injury here when, in expounding Ruth 2.15, he develops the point that ‘to reproach’ is to offer an injury (205-6). However, he goes on in his exposition of Ruth 2.9 to indicate that sexual injury is meant for he declares that Boaz gave the young men this charge because lust compels youth unless it is restrained (165). The danger Bernard perceives in Ruth’s situation is made clear when he observes that Boaz was in command of his servants, otherwise he would not have been able to make her safe (165). Bernard finds lessons for his own time from Boaz’s protection of Ruth when he draws attention to the responsibility of governors of families prevent their families being dishonest and unchaste (165-6).

According to Bernard, women

are subject to be tempted, to be deceived, and abused, being weake in temptation, and easily overcome. Let women learne here of *Naomi* her advice to *Ruth*, and follow it; let them beware of being alone as *Dinah*, or in suspected places with lewd women, or in light and wanton company. It is no good signe of a maidens chastitie, to seek to be in mens company, as many doe, till shame come upon them (239).

Like Lavater and Topsell, Bernard sees women as being culpable to a degree for immoral conduct. He even has reservations about Ruth’s behaviour when he draws attention, in his exposition of Ruth 2.22, to her inaccurate relation in Ruth 2.21 of Boaz’s instruction to her, in which she says he told her to keep close to his young men (239).<sup>92</sup>

On the whole, however, Bernard sees the danger to which Ruth is exposed as one arising from going into an unknown situation in order to earn her living. He observes that it is wrong to go unnecessarily into danger of being hurt and gives a religious reason for this – it tempts God, which is not allowed, and God has punished

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<sup>92</sup> Bernard’s criticism of Ruth for mentioning young men provides a starting point for the expressed questioning of Ruth’s morals at this point by the later commentator on *Ruth*, Thomas Fuller (Fuller 217). Bernard does not allude definitely to the discrepancy between Boaz’s speech and Ruth’s relation of it in his exposition of verse 21.

his people for this (240). But Bernard goes on to admit that men must go into danger if their calling requires it (240-1). It would appear, then, that since Bernard considers that Ruth went out to glean in the first place according to her feeling that she was called to do so, she was not at fault. Bernard emphasises that the danger of sin is always to be avoided (240). However, Ruth would not have sinned if she had been assaulted when she initially went out gleaning since she did not expect that anything like that would happen.

It is evident that all three commentators see a sexual threat to Ruth in her enterprise of gleaning and therefore have reservations about her engaging in it. Bernard's discussion draws together those of Lavater and Topsell, and coherently expresses the anxieties to which this episode in Ruth gave rise in the early modern commentator. These anxieties can be seen to relate particularly to the status of Ruth as an example for early modern women. In venturing into a dangerous environment, Ruth could be seen, even before the questionable threshing floor scene, to set a precedent for early modern women to behave contrary to expectations. They might then have appeared to the male authors of women's conduct prescriptions to be 'grotesque', in the sense that Stallybrass describes (126-7). As such, they could be seen to 'interrogate class and gender hierarchies alike, subverting the enclosed body' of the normative woman (Stallybrass 142).

The commentators may have been particularly alarmed at Ruth's exposing herself to danger, both in going out gleaning and in the later threshing floor episode (as will be discussed below) because she was a widow and the chastity of widows was much discussed in the early modern period. This is exemplified by Richard Brathwait's discussion of chastity in widows in his chapter on estimation in The

English Gentlewoman. Developing his opinion that chastity is more to be esteemed and more carefully to be preserved by widows than wives (111), Brathwait cites St. Jerome. According to Jerome, he states, a woman's chastity is frail, and is liable to fail when she is of an age conducive to vice, and she lacks the authority of a husband (112). Brathwait prescribes that widows should avoid the company of men (110). If the Ruth commentators thought along the same lines as Brathwait, this would at least in part account for the degree of their unease with Ruth, a widow, going out to glean where there were men, contrary to Brathwait's prescription. Similarly, such a concern could well explain why the commentators emphasise so much the importance of her being in the company of women once under Boaz's protection. Although the early modern commentators have reservations because of the dangers they see in Ruth going out to glean where there are men, they see her behaviour, both in Boaz's field and in her interaction with Naomi afterwards, as praiseworthy. They portray her in these scenes as conforming to the subservient model of the ideal woman.

Lavater, Topsell and Bernard all commend Ruth's courtesy in asking the owner's permission to glean even though this was in fact her right, referred to in Ruth 2.2 and 2.7 (Lavater 58v; Topsell 99; RR 154-5). Bernard also follows Lavater in drawing attention to Ruth's diligence in expounding the servant's report of her work in Ruth 2.7: '*painefulnesse in our labour with constancie, is prais-worthy*' (RR 156, Lavater 58v-59r<sup>93</sup>). He further substantiates this lesson from the Bible (RR 156-7). Notably, as Lavater also does at this point, he associates Ruth with the good housewife in Prov. 31. Bernard points out that, like Ruth, this good housewife

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<sup>93</sup> This page in Lavater is misprinted as 95.

worked willingly (Lavater 59r,<sup>94</sup> RR 156). In his exposition of Ruth 2.3, Bernard depicts Ruth working under the direction of the servant before Boaz's arrival:

Shee followed such as cut up the standing corne; she thrust not her selfe in before, or among them, as an impudent bold housewife; but followed after them, to gather up the scattered eares, which they did leave, and neither this did shee, neither without leave, see verse 7, all making to the commendation of the honesty, modestie, humility, and good behaviour of this vertuous young woman, that her example might be for others to imitate. (RR 139-40).

In drawing attention to Ruth's modest manner of gleaning, Bernard echoes the medieval Jewish commentator, Rashi, who claimed that Boaz saw signs of modesty and wisdom in Ruth in her behaviour in gleaning (BJE 106). Bernard's observation that Ruth did not thrust herself in before or among the reapers also echoes Lavater's comment that at the mealtime Ruth did not thrust herself into the middle of the reapers (75r). Bernard may consciously bring together the earlier commentators' observations regarding Ruth's deference and submissiveness in his depiction of her work.

The three commentators all remark on Ruth's obeisance to Boaz in Ruth 2.10, which is accompanied by her wonder at Boaz's courtesy to her, a stranger. According to Lavater, Ruth showed humility by her obeisance as well as by her words (64r). Furthermore, she showed 'shamefastnesse'<sup>95</sup> in falling to the ground, and not looking impudently at Boaz, as well as by not speaking for long with him. Lavater regards 'shamefastnes [sic]' as very important for women (65r). Topsell also notes the humility shown by Ruth in the way she prostrated herself before Boaz (113). Bernard sees Ruth's obeisance to Boaz as a sign of her thankfulness, being 'a

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<sup>94</sup> This page in Lavater is misprinted as 95.

<sup>95</sup> 'shamefastness': 'Modesty, sobriety of behaviour, decency, propriety; bashfulness, shyness. Also, a feeling of shame, ashamedness.' (OEDO).

most humble and lowly gesture', showing 'her good manners to so great a person' (168). He sums up Ruth's conduct at this point similarly to Lavater when he notes that she showed qualities which women should strive for: 'shamefastnesse', humility and wisdom. She did so in looking down rather than impudently at Boaz, in bowing to the ground (showing humility), and using effectual and few words (showing wisdom) (RR 172). The commentators' approval of Ruth's obeisance reflects the values of their society. Ann Rosalind Jones notes that William Gouge, in Of Domesticall Duties (1634) 'defines "wifely courtesy" as "that vertue whereby a wife taketh occasion to testifie her acknowledgment of her husband's superiority by some outward obeisance"'. She explains that '[h]e means that she is to bow down to her husband when he leaves or returns from a journey, in gratitude for favors he has bestowed upon her, and daily, "when she sitteth down or riseth up from table"' (A. Jones, 'Nets' 61<sup>96</sup>).

All three commentators also make observations about Ruth's conventional qualities as revealed in her response in Ruth 2.13 to Boaz's recognition of her deeds and prayer for her. Lavater draws attention to Ruth's humility, which shows up the disrespect of the Anabaptists: 'Let us learne to thinke humbly and lowly of our selves: and not defraud worthie men from theyr honor due unto them: she doth call BOAZ her Lord and her selfe his handmaid' (72r). Topsell notes Ruth's commendable thankfulness in confessing Boaz's courtesy (126-7). Furthermore, he perceives Ruth to have expressed more gratitude for Boaz's prayer than for his deeds of kindness, 'which noteth in her, a more hungring and thirsting after righteousness, then after all the maintenaunce of this present life' (127-8). That is, he emphasises

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<sup>96</sup> Citing William Gouge, Of Domesticall Duties: Eight Treatises (London, 1634) 281-2.

her piety in conventional terms, as does Bernard. Bernard draws attention to Ruth's humility in her acknowledgement of Boaz's favour (186), and particularly commends her for humbly calling herself Boaz's handmaid, and debasing herself according to her piety by declaring herself not to be like one of Boaz's handmaidens (191).

The commentators make some comment on Ruth's conventional conduct at the meal and in her continuation of her gleaning until the evening. In his exposition of Ruth 2.14, Lavater observes that Boaz commanded Ruth to eat with the reapers when he had perceived her to be 'modest and thankful' (73r). Moreover, her modesty is evident in her behaviour at the meal:

[S]he doth not thrust her selfe into the middle of the reapers, and her hand first in the dish as belly-gods doe, which do not take those thinges which are sette before them, but where soever they se more daintier, there their hands are. She waited until either BOAZ or some of his servauntes would reach her some portion. (Lavater 75r)<sup>97</sup>

In expounding the next verse Lavater commends her diligence and carefulness (76r-76v). At the beginning of his exposition of Ruth 2.17-19, he observes that 'RUTH is set before us as a clear glasse of many vertues', and again singles out her diligence and carefulness as well as her painful labour (78r).

Topsell, in expounding Ruth's return to work in Ruth 2.15, raises the question of whether Ruth gave thanks for the meal, but concludes that she and Boaz must have done so, and there was no need for this to be recorded (132-3). In drawing this conclusion, Topsell can be seen to try to make Ruth comply with an early modern model of good conduct. It is devout to say grace, so Ruth must have done so. According to Topsell, Boaz's generosity later in Ruth 2.15 in allowing Ruth to gather among the sheaves without blame was prompted by her admirable behaviour: 'her

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<sup>97</sup> The first part of this passage is the comment which has a resemblance to Bernard's observation that Ruth did not thrust herself in before or among the reapers whilst gleaning.



solitarie behaviour, her contented travaill, her diligent order in going so orderly to her busines agayne, were as orations or perswasions, to make him being godly, to approve and commend her above all the residue' (134-5). In his exposition of Ruth 2.17, he remarks on Ruth's diligence in working until evening and gleaning an ephah of barley, as though either she was a hired servant or Naomi was overseeing her. Ruth's example illustrates the principle that one should be as diligent in one's own business as when labouring for an employer, so fulfilling the religious obligation not to misspend time in God's view (Topsell 139, 140).

Bernard makes comparable comments on Ruth's conventional conduct in this section of the Ruth narrative. In expounding Ruth 14, like Lavater, and similarly to his own observation that Ruth did not thrust herself in before or among the reapers when gleaning, he notes Ruth's modesty in taking her place besides the reapers at the meal (RR 198). Before expounding the lemmata of Ruth 2.15, like Topsell, Bernard concludes that Ruth and Boaz gave thanks for their food. (RR 202). In his exposition of the observation in Ruth 2.17 that Ruth gleaned in the field until evening, he commends Ruth for following Boaz's advice that she should stay in his field. He observes that she found kindness in this field, and remarks that, in remaining there, where she was well-off, she showed wisdom and constancy. He also notes her 'sedulitie',<sup>98</sup> remarking that she did not rest until the time of rest (210).

The commentators find more exemplary conduct when Ruth returned to Naomi after having gleaned. In his exposition of Ruth 2.18, Lavater observes that Ruth showed Naomi all the barley she had gleaned and gave her food she had left over

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<sup>98</sup> 'sedulity': 'The quality of being sedulous; painstaking attention to duty, diligent application, industry.' (OEDO).

from the meal. ‘Let children learne to feede and to chearishe their aged parentes.’ (Lavater 80r-80v) Furthermore, according to Lavater, Josephus’s interpretation that Naomi had saved food for Ruth would show Naomi’s affection for her daughter-in-law (81r-81v). Lavater draws attention to Naomi’s questioning of Ruth about her gleaned in Ruth 2.19. He suggests that she thought that Ruth could not have gleaned so much in so little time and he maintains that children in such circumstances should be closely examined by their parents or masters in case they have committed theft (81v-82r). Ruth, Lavater observes, replied with exemplary filial respect: ‘RUTH doth willingly give an account to her mother in-law, shee doth not aunswere her crookedly: shee doth tel orderly what befel to her in the field. Let children doe the like to theyr parentes, and those that are set over them’ (82r). In commenting on Ruth 2.20, Lavater remarks on Naomi’s thankfulness to Boaz and Ruth, which she showed in words and deeds (85r-85v). He commends Ruth in Ruth 2.23 for joining with Boaz’s maids in obedience to her mother-in-law, but there is, perhaps, a hint of censure when he commends her for keeping Naomi company every night during the harvest: ‘for it becommeth mayds to be at home at night, and no other where’ (89r-89v). The threshing floor episode in Ruth chapter 3 is hardly consistent with this commendation.

Topsell, in expounding Ruth 2.18, follows Lavater when, having noted that Ruth laboured for her living, he remarks that she also refreshed Naomi with the food she was given when she was in the field, and so she provided ‘a heavenly and godly example of obedience and love toward her mother in lawe’ (Topsell 141). Later, in his exposition of Ruth 2.19, again showing a resemblance to Lavater, Topsell observes that Naomi questioned Ruth according to the duty of parents to their

children and masters to their servants to call them to account for how they spend their time. Children and servants, Topsell declares, should answer fully, like Ruth (Topsell 144-5). By contrast with Lavater and Bernard, Topsell even misleadingly construes the biblical text to make Ruth fit conventional norms, and, as noticed above, to suggest that sexual threat to her is not indicated by the way she reported Boaz's words. In his exposition of Ruth 2.21, he does not draw attention to the fact that whereas Ruth said that Boaz told her she was to keep with his servants, he actually told her to stay with his maidens (Topsell, 148, 131, 107). Rather, in Topsell's report of Ruth's speech, she is represented as saying that Boaz let her accompany his maidens (148). In his summary, too, of Ruth 2.15-23 at the beginning of the lecture, he makes the same misrepresentation (132). The fact that Topsell does this twice indicates that he does so deliberately. It is plausible that he meant to avoid the conclusion that Ruth desired male company. Topsell later represents Naomi herself as advising Ruth to stay with Boaz's servants in expounding Ruth 2.22 (150). He may have meant to suggest that it was unimportant that Ruth mentioned Boaz's servants to Naomi, should his readers have noticed that she did so. Topsell goes on in his exposition of Ruth 2.21, to point out conventional characteristics in Ruth which appear from his rendering of her relation of what Boaz had said: '[B]y these wordes of Ruth, wee have an example of perfecte thankfulnessse, omitting nothing that might serve to commende the kindness of Boaz: and also of womanlike and godlye modestye, that concealeth the cause of all this curtesye, which was her owne commendation' (148). Lastly, in his exposition of Ruth 2.23, Topsell coincides with Lavater in commenting that Ruth is an example of

obedience in that she listened to Naomi and went out with Boaz's maidens (Topsell 152)

Bernard, in expounding Ruth 2.18, observes that Ruth showed faithfulness in not hiding any of her gleaning from Naomi (218). Furthermore, he portrays Ruth's giving Naomi food after having shown her what she had gleaned as illustrating the fact that '*[g]odly children are kind and loving to their Parents*' (218). In this approbation he coincides with Lavater and Topsell. He also notes Ruth's frugality in reserving food for Naomi and herself and he advocates this virtue (220-1). Unlike Lavater, Bernard's exposition of Ruth 2.19 rules out the possibility that Naomi suspected that Ruth might have committed theft in getting so much grain; however, he does recognise the value of parental supervision. Here, he refers to 'some' (224) previous commentators on Ruth teaching this from Naomi's questioning of Ruth. Parents should ascertain how children spend their time. Fear of being questioned, he claims, may prevent children from wrongdoing (RR 222-4).

With respect to Ruth 2.21, Bernard, like Topsell, draws attention to Ruth's exemplary modesty in not mentioning Boaz's commendation of her (RR 236-7). In expounding Ruth 2.22, he commends Naomi for giving good counsel to Ruth in her capacity as a parent (238). The fact that he also inveighs against parents who give bad counsel to their children (238-9) possibly reflects his criticism of Naomi's counselling Ruth to approach Boaz on the threshing floor. All the same, he places great emphasis on Ruth's filial dutifulness in his analysis of Ruth 2.23, in the first place, in his summary of this verse: 'The obedience of *Ruth*, in following *Naomi* her advice, and her constant love unto her, in not departing from her.' (241) This summary is elaborated on in Bernard's treatment of the individual lemmata. He

coincides with Lavater and Topsell in expressly approving Ruth's following the good counsel of Naomi as a parent (241). Furthermore, he comments that the story shows her 'love and constant affection' for Naomi. She did not forsake Naomi although she might have done so because of benefit coming to her outside the home. According to Bernard, Ruth's example teaches the lesson that '*childrens favour abroad and good gettings should not draw them from their poore parents, so long as they stand in need of their helpe.*' (242)

Chapter 2 has a higher density of instances of conventional conduct than the other chapters in the commentary. It may be that the commentators particularly draw attention to Ruth's conventional conduct in chapter 2 in order to reassure themselves of her exemplary status given her questionable behaviour in putting herself in a situation where she was exposed to sexual threats. They might fear that women in their own society could be encouraged by Ruth's endangering herself to behave according to what Stallybrass calls 'the female grotesque' (Stallybrass 142). According to this interpretation, Ruth's impeccable conduct in the field allows the commentators to countenance her enterprise of gleaning as a whole.

### **6.3. RUTH CHAPTER 3**

Chapter 3, with its account of Ruth's coming to Boaz by night to claim marriage, constitutes a difficult problem for early modern biblical commentators seeking to find in scripture edifying examples for their readers. For instance, the events of this chapter can be seen as taking her infringement of Brathwait's values regarding the chastity of widows a degree further than her gleaning does. In this

section, by far the main emphasis is on Bernard's response to this problem. This is set in context by comparisons with Lavater and Topsell. Two different overall strategies are adopted to deal with the problem. Lavater and Bernard condemn the manner in which Ruth made her request of Boaz (Lavater 95r; RR 266). However, these commentators differ in their classification of the example of Naomi and Ruth. Lavater places their deeds in the category of wicked deeds, although he includes in this category a number of sins which are not heinous (93r-95r). Bernard, on the other hand, classifies Naomi's seeking a marriage for Ruth as mixed, partly good and partly bad (268). Both Lavater and Bernard point out that Ruth may have been at fault in obeying Naomi (Lavater 97r-98r; RR 269-270). Topsell's strategy is, like Bernard, to note an objection which might be made to Naomi's advice. However, he proceeds to defend this advice, although he declares that it would be amiss to follow the example, as it would be to follow Rebecca's advice to Jacob to acquire Isaac's blessing. He points out that the levirate justification for Ruth's request of marriage does not apply in his own time (169-71). In his view, Ruth was commendable for obeying Naomi (171). Topsell modifies his view in the 1613 edition of his commentary. There, he recognises that Naomi and Ruth may have been to blame (Topsell, 1613 ed. 191-2). All three commentators indicate the importance of not condemning a godly person but rather their deeds which are sinful (Lavater 102r-102v; Topsell 195-6; RR 283-4, 317-9). They all also draw attention to Boaz's virtue in connection with the good outcome of Naomi's advice (Lavater 95r; Topsell 170; RR 266).

At the outset, Bernard approves of Naomi's motives in conceiving her plan. She wished to provide a marriage for Ruth as a way of repaying Ruth for her love

and and labour. He thus indicates her benevolence. Furthermore, he states that, in this endeavour, she was acting as a mother would for her daughter (243). Coinciding with Lavater and Topsell, he indicates that Naomi was fulfilling the duty of parents to provide marriages for their children (RR 244).

Following his summary of Ruth 3.2, Bernard maintains that Naomi showed the resourcefulness of true friendship: ‘As *Naomi* affected to doe *Ruth* good, so shee devised the meanes; for, *A true friend is not in shew onely, or in wel-wishes, but in devising how to bring to passe what they desire, and to effect what truly they doe affect.*’ (247) In further expounding Ruth 3.2, he draws attention to the justification of Naomi’s selection of Boaz by the levirate law. He comments that she mentioned Boaz’s being of their kindred because of this law in Deut. 25.5-6. ‘Here wee doe see what ground she had to seek this match for *Ruth*,’ Bernard observes, ‘even the Law of God, as shee thought.’ (248) The words ‘as shee thought’, however, appear to be a qualification referring to the existence of a kinsman nearer than Boaz. In his sequential treatment of the lemmata in Ruth 3.3, he discusses the practices of washing, anointing and dressing which Naomi enjoined Ruth to perform. He holds washing away bodily uncleanness to be the sense of washing meant here, and that this is commendable when not taken to excess (254-6). Bernard approves anointing, conjoint with washing, but with reservations, which may reflect that he has reservations about Naomi’s instructions: ‘But here beware of excesse, that it be also seasonable, that it be to a good end; beware of pride, of wantonnesse, and learne to know the time of humiliation.’ (256) He explains uncritically the lemma, ‘*And put thy raiment upon thee*’: ‘That is, thy best apparell, or such as thou hast put upon thee handsomely.’ (258) By contrast with this equable discussion of Naomi’s initial

instructions, the next lemma in Ruth 3.3, '*And get thee downe to the floore*' calls for a more robust defence, based on the levirate law:

[S]o she is made by *Naomi* her advice, to goe to *Boaz*, and to demand marriage of him; which might seeme not fitting, but by *Moses* law it was allowed to the woman widow without children, to claime marriage of the next kinsman, if he neglected to take her <Deut. 25>: and it was no more immodestie for women to claime that right then, then now for one betrothed to challenge the man for her husband (263).

With reference to the instruction that Ruth was not to make herself known to Boaz until he had finished eating and drinking, Bernard provides further justification for Ruth's approaching Boaz at night and alone, echoing Topsell, and yet not greatly distancing himself from Lavater's sarcasm: '*The night, and in private, make modest persons utter more freely their thoughts, then otherwise they would in the light, and before company.*' (RR 264; Topsell 170; Lavater 92v) Bernard goes on to indicate that he does not unreservedly sanction Naomi's means of ensuring Boaz's freedom from inhibition. He observes that Naomi advised Ruth to raise the subject of marriage after Boaz had eaten and drunk since he would then be more likely to acquiesce. Evidently, in Bernard's view, this is outright manipulateness, for he comments 'Which beeing so, it should make men at such times more silent, and more observant of their speeches.' (264) Nevertheless, in expounding Ruth 3.4, he commends Naomi for advising Ruth to act humbly since humility will be rewarded:

Though *Naomi* aimed to make *Ruth Boaz* his yoke-fellow, yet she teacheth her to proceed in humility, to goe to his feet, and to lye downe there: For *humilitie is not any let, but the way to advancement*, and the reward thereof is riches, and glory, and life <Prov. 15.33 and 18.20 and 22.4>. (265)

Bernard's approval of a certain level of manipulateness in Naomi shows that he is prepared to relax the emphasis expressed in the conduct literature of his time on women's passivity.



In his exposition of Ruth 3.4, Bernard recognises that Naomi believed that because Boaz was religious and wise he would give Ruth good advice. However, he concludes that Naomi should not have advised Ruth to employ such means, that is, such a manner, in a passage which contains resemblances to both Lavater's and Topsell's discussions:<sup>99</sup>

The manner seemeth not to bee good nor approoveable, and my reasons be these: First, *Naomi* her counsel and advice to have *Ruth* to goe to *Boaz* to claime the marriage, was erroneous; for hee was not the next kinsman <Verse 12>, and therefore she should not have come thus first to him. Secondly, *Boaz* his speech implyeth, that it was not a matter of good report for them two to be thus alone together, if they had been seene so <Verse 14>. Thirdly, there was some shew and appearance of evill, which should bee avoided <1 Thess. 5>. Fourthly, because heere was an occasion of sinning offred, though not taken, nor intended; because fleshlinesse is that sinne to which most are apt, and the most excellent have fallen into it (266-7).

Thus, by this point in the narrative, when Naomi envisages Boaz's response to Ruth in the night-time on the threshing floor,<sup>100</sup> Bernard's earlier hesitations develop into outright censure. He acknowledges, as Lavater does (95r), that God brought about a good result to this manoeuvring. Bernard comments that God similarly turned to good other matters ill begun, including Rebecca and Jacob obtaining Isaac's blessing by deception. By mentioning this example as ill begun here before later classifying it with the instance of Naomi, Bernard emphasises that both actions were intrinsically wrong. Women, Bernard stresses, are not to follow the example of Ruth:

This example therefore of *Ruth* is not imitable. It giveth no warrant for mothers to teach their daughters to play the harlots, and to be bawdes to them; nor to allow yong women to go to yong men, and to give their bodies to be abused, in hope of marriage; nor to make night-matches and

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<sup>99</sup> For instance, in referring to 1 Thess. 5[22], Bernard follows Lavater and Topsell. The early modern commentators on *Ruth* frequently allude to this verse in their exposition of the threshing floor episode (eg. *Lavater* 95r; *Topsell* 197).

<sup>100</sup> According to the lemma expounded here, 'And lay thee downe, and he shall tell thee what thou shalt doe' (*RR* 266).

meetings to procure husbands, whilst they hereby often make themselves whores, to their own shame, and griefe of friends. (267)

Bernard goes on to classify Ruth's action. In doing so, he draws on the classification made by Lavater (93r-95r) and Topsell's critical identification of Ruth's example with Rebecca's counsel to Jacob (Topsell 170-1). Bernard can be seen here to make a new reading of his own. He makes a distinction between extraordinary and ordinary actions of the godly. Extraordinary actions include Abraham's offering of Isaac. These are not to be imitated but show God's freedom to dispense with his law. They correspond with Lavater's singular deeds. Then there are ordinary actions, which fall into four categories. Firstly, there are good actions allowed of God, such as Abraham's instruction of his household. These are to be imitated. They correspond with Lavater's deeds which are to be imitated. Secondly, there are bad, unlawful actions, including David's adultery and murder and Peter's perjury. These are not to be imitated; their avoidance depends on God's mercy. They correspond to Lavater's wicked deeds.<sup>101</sup> The other two categories of ordinary actions do not occur in Lavater.<sup>102</sup> The third category is mixed actions, in part good and in part bad. Here the example mentioned by Topsell, Rebecca's endeavour to obtain Isaac's blessing for Jacob, is linked with Naomi's plan to realise Ruth's marriage. These are the only two examples given by Bernard in this category. He declares that in both cases the manner is faulty. According to Bernard, '[t]hese are written to let us see our imperfections in doing a good thing, and to teach us to examine the wayes of the best, to know how farre they be imitable' (268). The

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<sup>101</sup> This is the category in which Lavater places the deeds of Naomi and Ruth (94v-95r). Lavater includes in this category sins which are not heinous. However, Bernard, it would appear, did not agree with classifying Naomi and Ruth with notoriously wicked individuals.

<sup>102</sup> Lavater has one category not included by Bernard – deeds which were approved in Old Testament times but which were not permissible in Lavater's day, such as following the levirate law. Bernard does not seem to have been as concerned as Lavater that people might seek to marry within the degrees of incest.

fourth category of ordinary actions is indifferent actions such as Samson's feasting the young men at his wedding. These may be performed in moderation (RR 267-9). By drawing on aspects of both his predecessors to define the example of Naomi and Ruth and to place it in a larger context, Bernard gives a new perspective to the status of this example.

Bernard notes Ruth's readiness to obey Naomi in verse 5, and attributes this partly to her reverence of Naomi and belief in her good will. He resembles Lavater in indicating that Ruth may have been culpable if she did not carefully consider the matter since advice may not be sound (RR 269; Lavater 97r-98r). According to Bernard, Ruth's willingness to comply also partly results from a desire to get a rich husband, 'for wee readily obey in that whereto wee incline our mind of our owne accord, there needeth little incitation' (269). This sceptical view of Ruth's motivation is consistent with Bernard's perception of the women's exploitation of Boaz's postprandial state in Ruth 3.3. Regarding Ruth's execution of Naomi's instructions in Ruth 3.6, Bernard observes that she was able to overcome any fearfulness because of her desire (270). He suggests that she followed Naomi's advice exactly in case she herself might otherwise have been blamed if the outcome had been bad. He does concede that Ruth showed the quality of obedience to parents, which is required of children, although he points out that they should only be obedient in lawful matters (270). Bernard's disapproval of the advice Ruth followed is evident in his exposition of Ruth 3.7, when he declares: 'A great shew of evil: for she went to a wrong man, it was also in the night, and alone, to him alone, and after his feasting too; a too bold adventure, upon her mothers weake advice' (274). In addition, following Lavater, he points out that Boaz in Ruth 3.10, did not express

approval of the manner of Ruth's coming but commended her for her intention to marry him according to the levirate law rather than seeking young men (RR 274; Lavater 102r102v). He also draws attention to Ruth's care to secure her own ends when she came softly to lie at Boaz's feet, avoiding waking him: '*We warily act a thing, where wee be loth to offend; and there are wee contented to waite patiently, where we feare to doe amisse, as Ruth doth here. This wisdom can we shew in attaining our desires in things of the world*' (274-5).

In expounding Ruth 3.9, Bernard adopts the strategy of shifting his focus from the problematic Ruth to the exemplary chastity of Boaz. He praises Boaz for his chastity and makes a comparison with the chastity of Joseph. He observes that some heathen are more chaste than wanton youths and lecherous old men in his own time (278-9). Lavater and Topsell also turn their attention from Ruth to the chastity of Boaz, but at a later point. In expounding Ruth 3.14, Lavater observes that both Ruth and Boaz contained themselves but emphasises the chastity of Boaz, and he too cites the instance of Joseph. Furthermore, Bernard's mention of unchaste youths and old men evidently derives from Lavater at this point (106v-108r). Topsell, in the 1613 edition of his commentary adds a passage to his exposition of Ruth 3.13. In this passage, he also draws attention to Boaz's chastity and makes comparisons, including identifying Boaz with Joseph with respect to their chastity (Topsell, 1613 ed. 201). Furthermore, like Lavater (and, as will be seen, Bernard), Topsell, even in the 1596 edition, draws attention to the chastity of Boaz in particular, in connection with Ruth 3.14. Although he notes that Ruth as well as Boaz was chaste (192-3, 194), he subsequently includes Boaz and Joseph but not Ruth amongst the godly whose purity cannot be denied (196). Thus, Bernard, in turning his attention to the

chastity of Boaz as early as in his exposition of Ruth 3.9, is maximising the effect of a strategy adopted by his predecessors. This may reflect his more detailed exposition, which allows him to address more issues as he works through the lemmata.

That Bernard is at a loss as to how to commend Ruth's conduct is suggested by his attempt to portray her as subservient in his exposition of the lemma in Ruth 3.9, '*And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid*'. He observes: 'Thus *Ruth* calleth her selfe, shewing her humility, as before in chapter 2.13 and here, by professing what a one shee would be unto him, humble and serviceable, as an handmaiden, if shee might obtaine her sute.' (279). Bernard points out that Abigail and Sarah showed humility similarly. He exhorts wives to follow their example in obeying their husbands' just commands (279-80). Bernard asks his readers further to note 'how this worthy woman doth humble and debase her selfe: for *the Godly think lowly and meanely of themselves*; as did *Abigail*,<sup>103</sup> also *David* [. . .]' (280). Bernard's depiction of Ruth in his exposition of this lemma conforms to a pattern in which the early modern commentators notice instances of praiseworthy conventional conduct in the women in chapter 3, and also chapter 4, evidently trying to compensate for their critical judgements of Ruth's approach to Boaz.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> See 1 Sam. 25.24.

<sup>104</sup> A few examples of the early modern commentators drawing attention to conventional conduct in the women in chapters 3 and 4 will be given here. As in chapter 2, in chapter 3 Lavater approves of the way Naomi questions Ruth, this time after she has returned from the threshing floor and the modest way Ruth responds. '[S]hee doth not aunswere frowardly, but she doth rehearse in order what was done.' (110r-110v). Topsell makes a comparable interpretation in expounding Ruth's request to 'spread the wing' of his garment over her in Ruth 3.9 to Bernard's interpretation of Ruth's calling herself Boaz's handmaid earlier in this verse. According to Topsell, Ruth is making a promise of obedience: 'as the little birde is at the call of his damme, so wives must be ready at the becke of their husbandes' (182). Bernard makes further observations regarding Ruth's being well behaved. For instance, he uses Boaz's reference in Ruth 3.11 to Ruth's reputation as a virtuous woman when agreeing to comply with her request to assure his readers that poor women may marry well if they have piety in their hearts and modesty in their countenances, apparel and gestures. '[L]et them preserve chastitie, and not bee given to youthfull company; let them bee skilfull in good huswifrie,

Bernard observes that Ruth's words in Ruth 3.9, '[s]pread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid', were a claim for marriage for some write that by a custom the man would throw the lap or wing of his garment over the woman when they contracted marriage (280-1). Here, he follows Lavater (100r-100v) and Topsell (180). Lavater, in turn, cites Nicholas of Lyra, who draws on Jewish tradition, notably Rashi (MET 61, 67 note 19; BJE 108). It may be that Bernard is consciously using material derived from Jewish commentary on the Book of Ruth. If so, this would be consistent with his making himself familiar with such commentary, and being willing to draw on it, as has been suggested above. It follows that he might have been influenced in his interpretation of the women's conduct, notably in chapter 3, by Jewish commentators on the Book of Ruth.

In expounding Ruth's reason, '*For thou art a neere kinsman*', Bernard comments how strongly the argument of the levirate law acted on Boaz: '[H]e was a good and a godly man, with whom the strongest argument to prevaile, is the Word of God' (282). He is recognising that Ruth, as a widow free to remarry, had in the levirate law, as part of her status, a solid, legal claim on Boaz. This was the legitimate element in Naomi's plan.

In his exposition of Ruth 3.10, Bernard notes in the first place that Boaz did not reprove Ruth for the manner of her coming. He gives the reasons for this and sums them up: '[T]he matter was lawfull, the ground and inducement just, the person

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painfull also and industrious, and having power to governe the tongue' (297-8). Chapter 4 provides the commentators with a number of occasions to approve conventional conduct in Ruth and Naomi, which they can be seen to seize in order to compensate for the impression they give of misconduct in chapter 3. Both Lavater and Bernard are impressed by Naomi's nursing Ruth's son (Ruth 4.16) rather than being idle (Lavater 152r-152v; RR 457-8). Furthermore, Topsell and Bernard, in expounding Ruth 4.10, approve of Naomi's giving up her land in order that Ruth might be married. They explain that Naomi was acting as a parent in the interests of Ruth (her daughter-in-law) (Topsell 236-7; RR 403).

honest and generally well spoken of, and her intendment not ill' (283). Furthermore, as Lavater also indicated, Boaz was charitable (RR 283; Lavater 102v). Bringing to mind his classification of Ruth's example as partly good and partly bad, Bernard exhorts his readers: '[L]et us not bee like such rigide Censurors, as those bee which condemne the best things, if they bee not every way as they ought' (284) He adds: 'Those also which make a small fault a great offence; rejecting the whole matter for the manner; the person for a little mistake.' (284) Here, he rejects the conclusion which could be drawn from his reflections on Ruth's actions, that she was unworthy.

Also in his exposition of Ruth 3.10, Bernard indicates one way Naomi's plan might have failed when he expounds Boaz's words, '*Blessed bee thou of the Lord*': 'These words shew how well hee tooke her comming and request made touching marriage; hee scorneth her not, hee putteth her not off, but accepts her' (284). The possibility of being scorned is also raised in Bernard's exposition of Ruth 3.11. Here, Bernard, noting that Boaz termed Ruth kindly his daughter, repeatedly draws attention to Boaz's social superiority to Ruth. For instance he describes Boaz as 'high and honourable' but speaking without roughness, according to his loving nature, to Ruth, a 'meane' person (292). Subsequently, he interprets Boaz to mean by the words, '*Feare not*' that Ruth should not be afraid that her hope will be disappointed. Despite the difference between them in social status, he will not take her lightly. According to Bernard, Ruth might have envisaged that her goal would not be achieved in the circumstances. He points out that, in such an instance, the poorer party usually 'feareth the alterabilitie of mans nature, though hapely good words may passe betweene them for the present' (293-4). In these passages, Bernard

develops the perception of his early modern predecessors that Ruth risked scorn or repulsion (Lavater 95v, 104r; Topsell 188). Evoking such a reaction would have been inconsistent with expectations of conduct in early modern women.

Regarding the lemma in Ruth 3.10, '*For thou hast shewed more kindnesse in the latter end, then at the beginning*', Bernard states that Ruth 'encreased and did not decay in goodnesse' (287). He later explains, in particular, that her last kindness was her willingness to marry an old man according to the law of God so as to make her dead husband again live in Israel. Bernard goes on, perhaps impelled by the approving biblical narrative, to praise Ruth, notably for her obedience to Naomi's good counsel:

See here in *Ruth*, how *true love, obedience to good counsell, and grace, doe overcome nature, and the law of lust*: for shee loved her husband, shee was obedient to *Naomi*, and in her selfe vertuous, and therefore reason and Religion did take place, and neither nature, nor lust prevailed with her. A good example for youth to follow. (288-9)

However, he is evidently praising Ruth's renunciation of young men in order to adhere to the levirate law, according to Naomi's advice, rather than to the manner of Ruth's night-time approach to Boaz which Naomi enjoined. Here, Bernard highlights the chastity of Ruth, as he did that of Boaz when he became aware of Ruth's presence.

In expounding the lemma in Ruth 3.11, '*For all the citie of my people doth know, that thou art a vertuous woman*', Bernard claims that Boaz's reason for contracting to marry Ruth, her widely known virtue, confirmed her and removed fear (295). Although Bernard will have in mind fear of being rejected by the socially superior party, he may well also imply that Ruth had good reason to fear, on account of the compromising situation she was in with Boaz. There may even be a hint of



disapproval in his noting that a reputation for virtue in a woman is a means of preferment, as Ruth exemplifies. Certainly, Bernard is here concerned to enumerate virtuous qualities which should be striven for, and which his evaluation of Ruth in the earlier chapters would illustrate (297-8). However, the concept of preferment brings to mind his earlier opinion that Ruth was willing to obey Naomi partly because she desired to get a rich husband (269).

In expounding Boaz's instruction to Ruth to '*[t]arry this night*' in Ruth 3.13 (RR 301), Bernard raises the objection, why would Boaz allow Ruth to be alone on the floor all night. In answer, he attributes to Boaz unselfish protectiveness and puts forward the view that he had chaste intentions. However, Bernard counters some of the arguments he suggests Boaz might have been acting on in exposing himself to sexual temptation. Even though Boaz may have been considering the fact that he was old, Bernard points out that 'some old are wanton enough'. Also, although Boaz might have been considering that he genuinely intended to marry Ruth if he could and therefore would not take advantage of her, 'many of unbridled affections make such oportunities, ready motives to themselves of abasing themselves one with another: because (forsooth) they mind to marry' (RR 303). Bernard's reservations in this passage are directed towards warning his readers against such an overnight accompanying of a man with a woman as Naomi engineered. Bernard makes a comparable assessment later in his exposition of this verse. He claims that Boaz behaved honestly towards Ruth in the night because he feared God. However, he goes on to point out that some men would have defiled Ruth, 'making it a sport to commit fornication, with those whom they thinke doe belong unto others, either betroathed maids, or married wives' (307). The warning is clear. Furthermore, in

Ruth 3.13, Bernard also emphasises Boaz's rectitude in not wronging the nearer kinsman, should he have wished to marry Ruth (304, 307). Had Boaz taken advantage of the situation and taken the kinsman's right, Naomi and Ruth would have been partly to blame for enticing him by Ruth's approach. Bernard previously condemns the manner Naomi advised Ruth to adopt in approaching Boaz partly (and in the first place) on the grounds that Naomi was in error since Boaz was not the next kinsman so she should not have come to him first (266). Furthermore, he evidently derives this point from Lavater, who observes that unless the nearer kinsman had renounced his right, Ruth would have done him an injury (Lavater 95v). Although Bernard does not mention Naomi and Ruth being at fault in this respect in these passages in Ruth 3.13, this is implicit in his discussion. His readers could conclude that the women's conduct was wrong.

With respect to Boaz's instruction to Ruth at the end of Ruth 3.13, to lie down until the morning, Bernard expresses the danger Ruth might have faced in the night had Boaz dismissed her. In particular, she would not have been safe on account of her sex: 'Neither is it safe for young women to bee abroad in the night; it savoureth not well, it befitteth not their sex, and may endanger their chastitie.' Furthermore, 'the night imboldeneth to al villanie and wickednes' (314).

In expounding the lemma in Ruth 3.14, '*And shee lay at his feet untill the morning*', like Lavater and Topsell, Bernard increasingly emphasises the chastity of Boaz as opposed to that of Ruth. This is consistent with his analysis of Ruth 3.9, where he diverts attention from the problematic Ruth to Boaz's chastity. However, at the outset of his exposition of Ruth 3.14, Bernard resembles Lavater and Topsell in observing: 'This is added, to shew their chaste and continent behaviour: for if they

had offended, the holy Ghost, who spared not *Noahs* drunkennesse, *Lots* incest, *Dauids* adultery, would not have concealed this fact' (RR 315; Lavater 106v; Topsell 192). That is, all three commentators draw attention to the chastity of Ruth as well as Boaz at this point. Bernard, in doing so, reinforces his earlier noting of Ruth's chastity in his exposition of Ruth 3.10. He goes on to make it clear that he is noting the chastity of Ruth as well as that of Boaz: 'They were both honest and feared God: and therefore they would not commit such wickednesse, albeit they had occasion offred.' (315). However, Bernard soon begins to focus on the chastity of Boaz in particular. As in Ruth 3.9, he makes a comparison with the chastity of Joseph (315). Bernard's anxiety about sexual immorality in his own time is evident in that he inveighs against those engaging in extramarital relations and puts forward arguments opposing sexual relations before marriage (315-6). Like Topsell, Bernard points out that the godly differ in their ability to withstand the sin of lust on account of their different degrees of grace:

Note besides, that these two godly persons kept themselves chaste, and how others accounted also godly, and that so were, yet were very fowly overtaken in this sinne of the flesh, as wee have example in *Lot* in a cave with his daughters; *Judah* with *Tamar*; and *David* with *Bathsheba*. From whence observe, that *Gods owne deare Children have not all the like measure of grace*, nor power to resist temptations, and to subdue their owne corruptions. (RR 316; Topsell 194-5)

It is only after this point that the emphasis on Boaz's chastity predominates in Topsell's and Bernard's commentaries. Evidently, they are anxious to represent Ruth as virtuous despite her audacity in chapter 3, but ultimately recognise that Boaz's virtue was crucial to the avoidance of sexual misdemeanour. Bernard finds three sorts of the godly in Scripture: those whose weaknesses are not recorded; those who are noted to have minor weaknesses; and those who are said to have committed

heinous sins. His examples of the first sort correspond to a considerable extent with Topsell's examples of the godly who have lived purely. Both commentators include Boaz but not Ruth (RR 316-7; Topsell 196). Bernard again mentions Joseph and Boaz as examples of chastity, amongst other righteous men by contrast with sinners, who all were yet saints of God (317-8). From this conclusion of the saintliness of godly sinners, Bernard goes on, like Topsell, to declare the wrongness of some people who, noting that some men professing religion sin, condemn all professors of religion as hypocrites (RR 318, 319; Topsell 196). Bernard also follows Topsell in insisting that the godly should not condemn each other for sinning (RR 318; Topsell 195-6), a point which applies to how Naomi and Ruth are evaluated for planning and putting into practice Ruth's approach to Boaz in chapter 3. Again like Topsell (195, 196), he feels the need to explain why God allows the godly to sin. According to Bernard, in the first place it is for their good, to make them appreciate God's mercy in daily preserving them; moreover, in their repentance they will become closer to God (318-9). Here, Bernard develops Topsell's mention of repentance as well as Lavater's discussion of repentance regarding wicked deeds in his classification of the deeds of the godly (Topsell 196; Lavater 93v-94r). In the second place, Bernard argues, developing Topsell's position (Topsell 196), it is for the greater damnation of the wicked, who reject religion on account of the sins of the godly. They should fear their own damnation all the more, seeing even some godly are scarcely saved, and seek God, instead of seizing on the sins of these godly to condemn others' profession of religion and not valuing religion in themselves (RR 319). Although Bernard categorises Boaz as not sinning in this discussion, his evident anxiety suggests that

he is conscious that any following their example might succumb and bring religion into disrepute.

With respect to the next part of Ruth 3.14, relating Ruth's rising early, Bernard suggests that Ruth may have got up early because she had a joyful heart and longed to tell Naomi the success of the careful implementation of her advice. He claims that this is borne out by her hasty report to Naomi in verse 16 (319-20). Although Bernard seems uncritical here, later in this exposition he points out that people are emboldened to do evil by darkness (320).

Bernard shows similar concerns to his early modern predecessors in his exposition of the last lemma of Ruth 3.14, '*For hee said, (or as others reade) And hee said, Let it not bee knowne that a woman came into the floore*' (321). The ground of his exposition is as follows:

*Boaz* herein sheweth his care of his and her honest name and credit, which might hereby bee brought into suspition, albeit their consciences had told them, that they had done nothing worthy blame, for any act of dishonestie. (RR 321)

Bernard can here be seen to use the word 'suspition' in a way which corresponds with Topsell's interpretation that Boaz was afraid that people might judge his being with Ruth to be unlawful (Topsell 199). That is, Bernard apparently refers to the deduction that wrong may have been done and an accompanying adverse judgement based on this deduction. Evil, Bernard goes on to teach, is suspected when a man and a woman are discovered together in unfit circumstances. According to Bernard, this is in part because 'men are not so charitable as they should bee' (RR 321). The concept that evil appearances give rise to adverse judgement is also formulated by Lavater (108v). Like Lavater and Topsell, Bernard furthermore teaches, as St. Paul does in 1 Thess. 5.22, that there is a duty to avoid even the appearance of

wrongdoing (Lavater 108r; Topsell 197; RR 321). Bernard develops Lavater's and Topsell's emphasis on caring for one's name (Lavater 108v; Topsell 199). Bernard points out that a good name is sought by the godly to silence adversaries and to gain glory for the Gospel which one professes. Bernard goes on to censure those who do not mind if they offend<sup>105</sup> men when they know that they have not done what they are suspected of. He further follows Lavater in citing passages in Isaiah and Jeremiah which depict shameless sinners, who are worse yet (Lavater 108v; RR 321-2). Thus, Bernard, drawing together the discussions of Lavater and Topsell, indicates how Boaz and Ruth were in a situation which, if they were detected, was likely to give rise to adverse judgement and a loss of reputation, and offence to others. Boaz is commended for endeavouring to prevent this (Lavater 109r; Topsell 197, 199; RR 321).

In Bernard's exposition of the lemma in Ruth 3.15, '*Bring the vaile that thou hast upon thee, and hold it*', his discussion of veils leads to a denunciation of the immodest dressing of women in his own society. He observes that Rebecca had a day-time veil which was thrown over the head and face to preserve modesty. Her modesty may condemn, declares Bernard, 'the wanton going of our women'. Furthermore, '[t]he Arabian women, yea and so the heathen Romane women went covered, as doe now the women in Spaine, not halfe naked, as many harlotries doe now in England, to the shame of Religion, and disgrace of the Gospell, having both heathen and Papists to condemne them' (RR 323). These English women have no religion, living rather as libertines (RR 323-4). Bernard expresses his disapproval of women dressing immodestly on two other occasions (pp. 173 and 261). It may be no

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<sup>105</sup> 'offend': 'To be a stumbling block, or cause spiritual or moral difficulty, to (a person); to shock morally or spiritually; to cause to sin.' (OEDO).

coincidence that he addresses the issue particularly in his treatment of chapter 3, for he may fear that such women may be joined in their opposition to orthodoxy by women led astray by the example of Ruth in the threshing floor episode.

With respect to the last lemma in Ruth 3.15, '*And she went into the citie*' (RR 326), Bernard follows Junius, Drusius and Lavater in maintaining that Boaz also went into the city. He attributes Boaz's setting aside his concerns about guarding his corn in order to attend to what he had promised Ruth to his love for her. Bernard cites biblical instances illustrating the strength of love, including Shechem's love for Dinah. He maintains the need to bridle love by directing it to spiritual things (326-7). Here too his anxiety regarding the preceding night-time encounter between Ruth and Boaz can be detected.

Bernard, in expounding Ruth's coming to Naomi in Ruth 3.16, is again uncritical of the gladness in Ruth he attributes to her as resulting from the kindness and hope for the future which she had received. Furthermore, he sees her as hastening home, partly because of her joy to tell Naomi of 'her happy successes'. However, his sense of the dangers to her can be seen in his reminder of 'the danger of the way, being so earely before day' (328).

In expounding the lemma at the end of Ruth 3.16, '*And shee told her all that the man had done unto her*', Bernard observes that in the Bible '*done* is [. . .] put for his word and promise which should be done: which argueth her perswasion that he would doe it' (329). That is, he concludes that Ruth trusted in Boaz's fidelity to his word. Naomi, Bernard notes, in expounding Ruth 3.18, also trusted in Boaz's probity. She knew 'his honest nature and true affection' (332). Again, later in the verse, Bernard focuses on credit and observes: 'this is true credit, when a mans word

is become of that force and validitie, as it maketh another to beleieve him without doubting. Such was *Boaz* his credit with *Naomi*' (334). Bernard's depiction of Naomi's faith in Boaz's honesty here reinforces his earlier claim that she would, with some justification, trust him with Ruth alone on the threshing floor at night because of his honesty (266). However, his reservations are apparent throughout most of his analysis of the chapter.

#### 6.4 RUTH CHAPTER 4: BREAST-FEEDING

The primary focus of this edition has been on how Bernard uses the Book of Ruth to address the issue of women's conduct prior to and during the threshing floor episode in chapter 3. Chapter 4 provides less material related to women's conduct than the previous chapters. It does, however, introduce one aspect of women's conduct, the exemplarity of mothers breast-feeding their children.

The practice of mothers leaving the breast-feeding of their babies to wet-nurses, if they could afford to do this, was well established in the early modern period, but Bernard was preceded by, notably, Topsell in challenging it. Furthermore, a short tract advocating breast-feeding by a woman may well have influenced Bernard, being published after Topsell's commentary but before Ruths Recompence. It will be pointed out that there are correspondences between Bernard's discussion and this tract. The tract was by Elizabeth Clinton, Countess of Lincoln, and was entitled The Countesse of Lincolnes Nurserie (1622). She acknowledges that she herself did not breast-feed her own children, stating the reasons:

it was not for want of will in my selfe, but *partly I was overruled by anothers authority*, and *partly deceived by somes ill counsell*, & *partly I*



*had not so well considered of my duty in this motherly office, as since I did, when it was too late for me to put it in execution. (15-16)*

Evidently, she feels that if good advice had been made available to her, she might have resisted pressure to employ wet-nurses. It is her regret that has prompted her to present a case for mothers breast-feeding their children (16). The case is partly pragmatic:

I have found by grievous experience, such dissembling in nurses, pretending sufficiency of milke, when indeed they had too much scarcitie; pretending willingnesse, towardnesse, wakefulnesse, when indeed they have beene most wilfull, most froward, and most slothfull, as I feare the death of one or two of my little Babes came by the defalt of their nurses. (18)

Clinton makes a range of further arguments in favour of breast-feeding in the tract, and those of her arguments which relate to those of Topsell, and particularly Bernard, are mentioned below.

In expounding Naomi's becoming the nurse of Ruth's first-born son, Obed, in Ruth 4.16, Bernard moves from identifying Naomi's role here as a dry nurse to pointing out that the other sort of nurses found in Scripture were milk nurses, who breast-fed their children. Mothers in Scripture invariably breast-fed. He declares that it is the mother's duty to breast-feed her children if she is able to do so. Women who evade this duty are 'wanton Dames', who do so 'that they may be fitter to follow their lusts' (460). Bernard goes on to give reasons why mothers should breast-feed their own children. His case for breast-feeding by mothers will be set in context by comparing it with Topsell's, also in expounding Ruth 4.16, and Clinton's. Lavater does not advocate breast-feeding, although he does distinguish Naomi as a non breast-feeding nurse from a breast-feeding nurse (152r-152v). It has been shown that Bernard was evidently familiar with Topsell's commentary. He may also have

the Countess of Lincoln in mind specifically when he observes that some ladies in his time do not disdain the duty of breast-feeding (RR 463).

Topsell and Bernard write with the authority of their status as clergymen. However, their discussions on the subject of breast-feeding do not occupy a particularly salient position in their commentaries, occurring as they do towards the end of chapter 4 where the biblical story touches on the subject of nurses. This is by contrast with Clinton's publication which is entirely devoted to the issue of breast-feeding. Nevertheless, it will be seen that Bernard's and, especially, Topsell's discussions are comprehensive. Topsell makes some arguments which are also given by Bernard, although each commentator also uses arguments which the other does not. This reflects their different concerns and, apparently, the influence of Clinton's arguments. Topsell, in considering Naomi's being said in the biblical narrative to have become nurse to Ruth's son, maintains that Naomi could not have breast-fed him since she was old and did not have milk. However, he emphasises the importance of the nursing role she did have, which teaches grandparents in his own time to play the educational role he promotes (287-8), as will be noted below. This distinction leads him to enquire whether it is lawful for children to be put out to nurse rather than be nursed by their own mothers. He declares that the word of God requires breast-feeding of a woman's own children if she is healthy (288). As will be noted below, his main arguments confirming this are also given by Bernard. Topsell also attacks gentlewomen, when he cites the biblical precedents for breast-feeding, claiming it is better to conform to these godly examples than to 'the peaceable, and pleasant devises of all the gentlewomen in the worlde whatsoever' (Topsell 289).

Topsell's first argument is that God created women with breasts which enable them to breast-feed, and that it is therefore sinfull if they do not do so (288-9). Bernard similarly declares that mothers' breast-feeding is the principal end of women's having breasts. He goes further than Topsell, however, in that he supplements this basic argument, notably with anatomical arguments, including the positioning of the breasts near the heart so that blood soon reaches them, so providing for the infant (RR 460-2). Possibly, Bernard was aware of anatomical research in his time, which significantly culminated in the publication in 1628 of Exercitatio Anatomica de Motu Cordis et Sanguinis in Animalibus (An Anatomical Study of the Motion of the Heart and of the Blood in Animals). Bernard also points out that God provides milk in the breast when the infant is ready for birth (461). He may have found a precedent for this argument in Clinton, who says much the same (Clinton 9-10). Topsell's second argument is the obligation to conform to breast-feeding practice of biblical women (289). Bernard similarly lists biblical women whose example teaches the duty of mothers to breast-feed their own children (463). Clinton also compiles a similar list with more detail than Bernard provides (Clinton 3-5). Nor does Bernard cite Clinton's example of Eve, with whom she may have identified herself because of her own transgression in not breast-feeding her children and later repentance. Bernard goes on to cite further biblical passages which indicate that breast-feeding is a blessing. One of these is Hos. 9.14, where, as he observes, dry breasts are mentioned as a curse (463). Here, he may be following Clinton who also points out that dry breasts are seen as a (divine) punishment, and infers that mothers breast-feeding their children is God's ordinance (Clinton 7-8).

Topsell's third argument is that failure to breast-feed is a sign of lack of love in the parents since the strangers to whom the children are committed cannot be so 'inwardely kinde' to them as the mothers should be (289-90). Topsell also here indicates reciprocity between mother and child, for he claims that the child would be more thankfull to his mother if she had nursed him (290). Clinton makes a comparable argument when she suggests that mothers who will not perform this office of love and nature deserve to be despised and neglected by their children (11). Bernard concurs with his predecessors when he similarly argues that mothers putting their children out to strangers is not a token of great love for them, and that it is only right if the children are afterwards 'over-strange' to their mothers (462). However, in various parts of his discussion, he develops to a greater extent than Topsell, in particular, an analysis of the relationship between the mother and the child. He derives from Plutarch the view that the mother's milk transmits her love to the child (462), and later claims that this makes the children love their mothers (463). That is, he offers an explanation of emotional bonding between mother and child. He also shows his concern with the relationship between mother and child in the argument he makes from physiology. This argument has a precedent in Topsell's discussion, but not in Clinton's tract; she declines to engage in more learned discourse (Clinton 11-12). Bernard's argument has some resemblance to what in Topsell is a fourth argument, that is, the unnaturalness of children being nursed by other women because they grow better with the milk of their own mothers. By contrast with this beneficial effect of maternal breast-feeding, putting a child out to a nurse who has a different disposition and complexion causes it to be made into another nature (290). Bernard's physiological argument, which evidently demonstrates his concern to

improve on Topsell's explanations, derives from the heathen philosophers and contemporary medical knowledge. It is that it is not as natural for children to be nursed by other women than their mothers since different bodies have different temperatures, so transferring children away from maternal breast-feeding will cause an alteration (462). According to Bernard, the learned writer of his own time, Bartholomeus Keckermannus,<sup>106</sup> attributes to this physiological reaction not only the degenerating of the sons of great men, but also their lack of love for their mothers (462).

Topsell has some arguments not followed by others. He alone of the three writers associates the obligation for mothers to breast-feed their own children with the importance of parents bringing up their children in infancy (288, 291-2). Evidently Topsell is more concerned than, most notably, Bernard with the early education of children.<sup>107</sup> Topsell also claims that breast-feeding is advantageous for the mother's health since it means that the channels of milk in the breasts are not stopped up, which would harm her (290). This argument may be meant to appeal to women as opposed to the men who might be expected to coerce the behaviour of women. Clinton makes a similar claim that breast-feeding benefits mothers' health (14). Topsell furthermore, alone of the three, recognises that the nurse as well as the parents is to blame for wet-nursing (291). Bernard, in contrast, does not engage in the practicalities of tackling the matter. Topsell also permits wet-nursing in the case of danger to the mother or child (291), as does Clinton (17). Bernard only makes this

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<sup>106</sup> 1571-1608.

<sup>107</sup> This is also indicated by the fact that Bernard's observation that dry nurses help bring up children (RR 460) does not convey the extent of Topsell's case for the need for helpers of the parents, or carers, to assist in providing for the welfare of the children (Topsell 292-3). See, too, Topsell's advocacy of grandparents caring for their grandchildren, in part by educating them (287-8), and a short discussion he makes of dry nurses (291).

implicit by declaring that the mother's duty is to breast-feed '*if possibly shee be able*' (460). He is more concerned to advocate breast-feeding as correct conduct than to consider the exceptions to the rule and make a balanced assessment.

Bernard only makes a few arguments which go beyond developing different emphases from Topsell, and, as has already been noted, some of these are found in Clinton. A further instance is his first argument, not found in Topsell despite his interest in zoology, that beasts set an example by suckling their young (RR 460-1). This argument may derive from Bernard's biblical knowledge making him aware of the example in Lam. 4.3, which he cites, of sea monsters suckling their young. However, it is possible that he follows Clinton, who observes that beasts, being provided with milk, suckle their own young (Clinton 9). He also, in observing that some ladies do not disdain to breast-feed, points out that the wealthy, whom he is chiefly addressing, can afford to employ a dry nurse to perform other tasks, whereas the poor cannot (463). This point makes his case more compelling, and is not brought out by Topsell, who, later in his exposition than his commendation of breast-feeding, only draws attention to the importance of parents providing carers for their children, in particular, for when they themselves are absent (Topsell 292-3). That is, Topsell does not make it explicit that only wealthy parents can afford to pay carers so enabling the mother to concentrate her attention on breast-feeding. Bernard may well have derived his point from Clinton, for she points out that women of high rank, who are most at fault in refusing to breast-feed their children, have more assistance than women living by hard labour to enable them to breast-feed and so set a good example instead (Clinton 11). Bernard also makes the less weighty argument, not found in Topsell or Clinton, that the infant's first word is 'Mam', and since this is

short for ‘Mamma’, or breast, the mother is reminded of her duty to breast-feed (461).

Thus, although Bernard’s discussion is not quite so comprehensive as Topsell’s, he both develops Topsell’s arguments and adds further arguments, some of which are found in Clinton’s tract. Her influence, indeed, is manifest. Although Clinton defers to men, for instance referring her readers to preachers towards the end of her tract (20), Bernard’s discussion of breast-feeding shows what a powerful case she makes. Clinton, furthermore, has a supplementary line of argument which makes her case even stronger. Topsell’s and Bernard’s treatments of the subject of breast-feeding demonstrate male endeavours to influence women’s conduct in this matter, largely by appealing to divine authority. Clinton also makes this appeal, but additionally, makes a persuasive argument from her own experience which the male commentators cannot do. It is remarkable that a woman in the early modern period was able to make her voice heard regarding an issue which concerned her sex but which was almost exclusively debated by men.<sup>108</sup>

## 7. RECENT FEMINIST WRITING ON RUTH

Matters will now be brought to a conclusion by surveying some recent feminist writing on Ruth.<sup>109</sup> This survey will draw attention to the differences between how

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<sup>108</sup> Jane Sharp, later in the century, also advocates mothers breast-feeding their own children in her The Midwives Book (1671). Her writing derives from her experience as a midwife. In particular, she draws on the writings and translations of Nicholas Culpeper (Moscucci, ODNB).

<sup>109</sup> Two collections of feminist essays edited by Athalya Brenner are drawn on here: Athalya Brenner, ed., A Feminist Companion to Ruth, *The Feminist Companion to the Bible* 3 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993); Athalya Brenner, ed., Ruth and Esther, *The Feminist Companion to the Bible* (Second Series) 3 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).

modern scholars interpret Ruth and how Bernard did so. A very significant difference is that interpretation of the Bible in the early modern period accepts the assumption that every word is dictated by the holy Ghost, whereas modern interpretation is unconstrained by any such assumption. Lavater, Topsell and Bernard make reference to the holy Ghost, who wrote the book by means of a penman (eg. Lavater 2r; Topsell 1, 3; RR 2, 14). For them, Ruth is the word of God. The feminist scholars, however, generally see Ruth as an entirely humanly composed story. The editor of the two volumes of feminist essays drawn on here, Athalya Brenner, observes that it might be said that ‘we are dealing with fiction, not with “reality”’ (FCR, ‘Naomi and Ruth’ 73). Fokkelien van Dijk-Hemmes argues that the story of Ruth ‘has the characteristics of a popular story’ that could have originated and have been transmitted by professional narrators, who included women (137-8). Furthermore, during the time when the story was transmitted orally, the audience may have been involved with developing the components of the story framing the episodes. The story could then have been ‘a collective creation of women’s culture’, far from the origin asserted by the early modern commentators (van Dijk-Hemmes 138-9). Bernard’s whole method of exposition, in which he finds doctrines from the text and elaborates them, is totally at variance with these feminist scholars’ approach to interpreting Ruth.

Feminist critics are particularly interesting when Ruth is considered, as it is a text where women play a salient role in a story with many patriarchal features. The emphasis of the feminist scholars is on showing women’s agency in biblical society, in particular, by the use of recent ethnographic studies. This is clearly at variance with Bernard’s approach, for he only recognises the initiative of the women in Ruth



when the narrative compels him to do so. Certain issues noted by Bernard are more thoroughly examined, such as the divergence of Ruth from, in particular, Ezra and Nehemiah regarding intermarriage, which is interpreted with respect to the Torah from a feminist perspective. Four feminist scholars interpret Orpah as being not necessarily at fault, and even praiseworthy for returning home. This is by contrast with the early modern commentators' view that she was a backslider (Lavater 36r; Topsell 51, 52, RR 75-6, 80, 81). Although Lavater raises the issue of Orpah's fate, he does not allow of any good outcome for her unless she turned to Judaism (Lavater 36v). One issue which recurs in the feminist scholars' essays, and is touched on in this survey is the problem of reconciling Ruth's Moabite identity with her role as a heroine.

Several feminist scholars draw on the modern translation of Ruth by Jack M. Sasson.<sup>110</sup> Sasson undertook this translation, together with a philological commentary, in order to promote his own understanding of how Ruth engineered Boaz's becoming the redeemer of Naomi (Sasson xi). His translation is not entirely literal, but he aims to explain any difference from the Hebrew in the philological commentary (Sasson xi-xii). To the translation and philological commentary Sasson adds a formalist-folklorist interpretation which draws on the work of V. Propp (xii-xiii). One instance of a difference between Sasson's translation and the Authorized Version occurs in Ruth 4.5. The Authorized Version states that Boaz told the nearer kinsman that the day he [the nearer kinsman] bought the field from Naomi, he [the nearer kinsman] must also buy it of Ruth to raise the name of the dead on his inheritance. According to Sasson, however, Boaz declared that the day he [the

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<sup>110</sup> Jack M. Sasson, Ruth: A New Translation with a Philological Commentary and a Formalist-Folklorist Interpretation (1979).

nearer kinsman] purchased the field from Naomi, he [Boaz] was acquiring Ruth to keep up the memory of the deceased on his estate (Sasson 6). Sasson discusses the verse at length in the philological commentary (119-36). He concludes that following Ruth's eliciting from Boaz, at Naomi's prompting, a vow to marry her, Boaz acted on his recognition that in order to dissuade the nearer kinsman from buying Elimelech's land, he had to convince him that he would not benefit from buying the land. He declared (in Ruth 4.5) before a legislative assembly that he would make Ruth's first born son Mahlon's heir, the future owner of the land (135). This interpretation suggests an advantage to Boaz as well as to Ruth of their marrying, and thus throws a new light on Ruth's persuasion of Boaz at the threshing floor.

Sasson's translation of Ruth 4.5 is addressed by the feminist scholar Adrien J. Bledstein. She prefers a translation she derives from Cyrus Gordon, in which Boaz declares that this day he (the nearer kinsman) acquires the field from Naomi, but he (Boaz) has (already) acquired Ruth to raise the name of the deceased on his estate (Bledstein 127). According to Bledstein, Ruth and Boaz consummate their marriage on the threshing floor (125). However, Bledstein's main point is present in Sasson. This is that Boaz perceives that if Ruth bears his child, the nearer kinsman will be obliged to transmit the land to this heir of Elimelech (Bledstein 126; Sasson 135). Furthermore, Bledstein uses Sasson's translation primarily when engaging with Ruth and draws on his commentary (Bledstein 118, 122). This supports her interpretation of the story. In particular it reinforces her portrayal of Ruth as pushing her interests when accessing and speaking to Boaz. For example, Bledstein relates that Sasson claims that Ruth's request to gather among the bundles required the permission of the

owner, and she made this request to secure being introduced to the owner (Bledstein 122; Sasson 47-8). Overall, Bledstein's use of Sasson lends weight to her argument that a woman, specifically Tamar (David's daughter), narrated Ruth in such a way as to show, notably, 'the survival tactics' of women (Bledstein 132-3). Although Bledstein draws particularly heavily on Sasson, other feminist critics evidently also find his work of value in validating their arguments.

One feminist approach involves interpreting Ruth in relation to the Torah. Mieke Bal observes that Ruth 'is an institutionalized *metatext*, which was meant to be read at specific feasts and to comment upon the Torah' (47). The function of Ruth of commenting on the Torah is elaborated by Irmtraud Fischer in her essay entitled, 'The Book of Ruth: A 'Feminist' Commentary to the Torah?' Fischer notes that the book belongs in the Writings, indicating that when it was composed the Pentateuch and much of the Deuteronomic History had probably been completed. She sides with those scholars who see Ruth as combating the hostility to mixed marriages found in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah (Fischer 34). This alignment is made clear in her consideration of Ruth as exegesis of the legal text in the Torah, Deut 23.4-7. She claims that the author of Ruth addresses the Moabite Ruth's prominent place in the genealogy of Judah.<sup>111</sup> The author shows that the exclusion of Moabites from the congregation of Israel in Deut. 23.4-7 is not valid in the case of Ruth. This is because the reason for it, Moabite inhospitality to Israelites, does not apply. In Ruth, the Moabites accepted Elimelech's family, and the Moabite Ruth provided for Naomi. She did this through going out gleaning despite lacking contacts who might support her, and she also provided for Naomi by urging Boaz to assist her through

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<sup>111</sup> Here Fischer touches on a problem which recurs in the feminist essays, of reconciling Ruth's Moabite identity with her role as a heroine.

Ruth's marriage. According to Fischer, the author of Ruth, whom she depicts as female (or 'women-identified' (34)) engages here with the view expressed in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, that is, by men, that mixed marriages are altogether to be condemned (35-7). This view, Fischer observes, was justified by reference to Solomon's failings through foreign women. She notes that, by contrast, the author of Ruth does not mention Solomon but refers to Solomon's father David, descended from the Moabite, Ruth (46). This author is motivated, Fischer claims, by a recognition of the problems arising from forbidding mixed marriages (47).

It has been argued above (section 4.2.2) that Bernard attempts to resolve the apparent inconsistency between the ethos of the Ruth, in which marriages between Jews and Moabites are related without comment, and the condemnation of intermarriages in other parts of the Bible. His strategy for doing so is to claim that the deaths of Mahlon and Chilion were to punish them for persisting in their married lives in Moab (30). However, this argument for consistency is only undermined by his recognition, contrary to his interpretation of wrongdoing, that the Moabites showed hospitality in allowing their women to marry Mahlon and Chilion (19-20, 28). Fischer's argument, that the author of Ruth showed that the prohibition was invalid because of this hospitality, attributes to this author the solving of the problem of biblical inconsistency, which Bernard does not recognise.

Fischer also attributes to the author of Ruth a feminist interpretation regarding the legally defined institutions, the levirate marriage and redemption. According to Fischer, Ruth combines levirate and redemption, interpreting both laws in the interests of women (herself and Naomi) in a patriarchal society, when she addresses Boaz on the threshing floor with her request for marriage (40-1). This is evident in

her choice of word describing him as a near kinsman when she makes this request. Fischer also notes instances in Ruth of reference to Torah narrative texts (42-5). By her allusion to various kinds of texts in the Torah, the author of Ruth legitimises her contrary position to male xenophobic biblical authors, who also refer to the Torah. Her emphasis is on favouring women (46). According to Fischer, Ruth's closure is significant – it ends with an agnatic genealogy which would have made the story more credible in a patriarchal society. This genealogy, however, reflects the agency of Naomi and Ruth, who built the House of David. The story of Ruth accordingly is to be read politically. Ruth refers to the Torah and constructs the history of the people as the history of women (48-9).

Fischer's argument is interesting, and such an intertextual approach is foreign to the early modern commentators, who do not interrelate texts to any great degree. However, not all the modern feminist writers agree with Fischer's view that Ruth was written at the time when Israelite men were enjoined to divorce their foreign wives. Bledstein, for instance, argues that the language of Ruth identifies it with the monarchic period (Bledstein 132).

Some feminist scholars, unlike Bernard and his predecessors, focus on women's agency in biblical society when they comment on the 'mother's house' to which Naomi tells her daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah to return in Ruth 1.8. Brenner draws attention to Phyllis Tribble's comment on this phrase, that it was not usual for a patriarchal culture and it denoted for one thing, the separation of these women from men (Brenner, Introduction, FCR 15). Carol Meyers, in particular, focuses on the phrase in her essay in the 1993 volume, 'Returning Home: Ruth 1.8 and the Gendering of the Book of Ruth', and her treatment of the phrase will be

related here. She first discusses the 'father's house', and notes that in a number of places in the Hebrew Bible, 'mother's house' refers to the same entity (94-5). Her account of the comment on the phrase 'mother's house' in commentaries on texts where it occurs includes the explanation, that the father is dead (Meyers, 'Returning Home' 95). It may be noted that Bernard puts forward the explanation that children have most affection for their mothers (RR 46-7). Meyers describes the 'father's house' as a family household. She emphasises the importance of women in household production, even though men may have been privileged in outward status ('Returning Home' 98-9). She goes on to discuss other places in the Bible where 'mother's household' occurs (99-109). The common characteristics she identifies for the various contexts of 'mother's house' include women being agents of their own destiny ('Returning Home' 109), and the setting being domestic ('Returning Home' 110). Meyers points out that in the household setting, women were heard, valued and influential. She also claims that women's influence went beyond the family household ('Returning Home' 111). Rejecting the pervasive scholars' dichotomy of public and private allows the recognition that family life was not separate from the economy, politics and religion. Female power in the household had implications outside it (Meyers, 'Returning Home' 111-12). Meyers goes on to draw attention to the role of Israelite women in arranging their children's marriages. One instance of this is Naomi's concern for the marriages of Ruth and Orpah. Women had to exercise diplomacy in arranging marriages, which linked different social units (Meyers, 'Returning Home' 112-3). Meyers emphasises that although the term 'mother's house' may be unusual in Bible, which is androcentric, it would not have been unusual in the life which was described. She observes that anthropologists have

found that there is discrepancy between the male dominated account of a society and reality, in which women play a significant role ('Returning Home' 113). This observation points to an anthropological approach to elucidating the agency of women, which is engaged with by Meyers herself, in particular, in a later essay. According to Meyers, the unusual mention in the Bible of 'mother's house' indicates female wisdom and power, and Ruth 1.8 accordingly may be regarded as a female text ('Returning Home' 113-4).

Meyers' mention of the relevance of the work of anthropologists to biblical study is developed in other essays. Fokkelien van Dijk-Hemmes considers whether Ruth might be a product of women's culture. She observes that anthropologists and sociologists have hypothesised a women's culture (134-5). Van Dijk-Hemmes points out that Elaine Showalter has utilised 'women's culture' with respect to literature by women authors, and praises the work on women's culture of the anthropologists Shirley and Edwin Ardener (135). They see women as constituting a 'muted' group associated with the dominant male group; women are an invisible background of the dominant culture (van Dijk-Hemmes 135). Van Dijk-Hemmes derives from Showalter's discussion criteria for recognising the voice of Ruth as female or feminine. She finds that these criteria are met (135-7). For instance, in the neighbouring women's declaration that a son has been born to Naomi, the dominant male/masculine view is countered by the women's story (van Dijk-Hemmes 137). Van Dijk-Hemmes makes a further, formal argument in support of her claim that the story of Ruth came from women's culture. This has been noted above, and consists of the observation that the story of Ruth has the features of a popular story, which

could have originated and have been transmitted by professional narrators, who included women (van Dijk-Hemmes 137-9).

Van Dijk-Hemmes applies anthropological theory to textual analysis. Carol Meyers, by contrast, in her essay in the volume published in 1999, “‘Women of the Neighborhood’ (Ruth 4.17): Informal Female Networks in Ancient Israel’ elaborates a strategy that illuminates biblical society by the societies studied by anthropologists. Meyers observes that work and authority in everyday life in pre-modern societies are seldom hierarchical according to gender, although such hierarchies may occur in political and jural spheres. Recent studies examine areas such as the connection of the household with the wider community. Meyers’s focus is on women’s informal groups, and to understand these she turns to recent ethnographic studies which are not androcentric. These studies show women connecting with other women outside their families (Meyers, ‘Women’ 113-116). According to Meyers, women’s networks ‘provide critical social linkages’. They perform important social and economic functions (Meyers, ‘Women’ 117). Meyers observes that in ancient Israel, alliances were formed between families by marriages, and gave rise to mutual aid between families. She claims that women’s networks probably carried out the allied groups’ socio-economic functions. This was because married residence was patrilocal, so women had ties with both their own relatives and their husbands’ relatives. Meyers observes that the Hebrew Bible does not comment on the role of women’s networks in alliances. However, cross-cultural research shows that it is women who bring together settlements of people linked by marriage. Meyers claims that this is evidence for similar action in ancient Israel. Patrilocal residence also



favours women being instrumental in the choice of marriage partner for their sons from their natal community ('Women' 117-118)

Meyers's emphasis is on alliances between women in the marital community, exemplified by two passages in Ruth. In Meyers's view, characteristic of the opinion of the feminist writers, as noted above, Ruth is a folk story rather than an accurate record of events. However, she concurs with the view of the majority of critics, that it authentically renders features of Israelite society ('Women' 119). Meyers draws attention to the women of Bethlehem greeting Naomi in Ruth 1.19,<sup>112</sup> and to the coming together of the neighbourhood women for the birth of Obed and their naming him, in Ruth 4.17. In these instances, women's behaviour in informal groups is depicted (Meyers, 'Women' 120). Meyers claims that ethnographic studies have been useful in showing how women's groups in Ruth and other texts operated. Informal women's networks are revealed by such studies to have been especially important in societies at subsistence level, as were Israelite villages (Meyers, 'Women' 122). According to Meyers, ethnographic studies are also helpful for showing how religion would have been exercised in Israelite households. Women's roles in making feasts, managing the upkeep of tombs of ancestors, and undertaking vows are widely recognised (123-4).

In summing up, Meyers points out that the social dynamics of women's informal networks need to be examined ('Women' 125). She claims that women's alliances were essential for the economic and social functioning of small, premodern communities like those in ancient Israel. They also benefited the women themselves,

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<sup>112</sup> Here, Meyers evidently draws on Sasson's translation of Ruth, which she cites in an earlier footnote: 'J. Sasson, Ruth: A New Translation with a Philological Commentary and a Formalist-Folklorist Interpretation (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979).' (119). Sasson translates this part of Ruth 1.19 as follows: "Could this be Naomi?" asked [the women]' (2). However, the Authorized Version does not indicate that women were speaking.

in that they gave women leadership roles, expanding and enhancing their lives. Moreover, women were part of the public domain through their associations within and between communities (Meyers, 'Women' 126).

Meyers's essay differs from Bernard's approach in its anthropological methodology and in its emphasis that women's agency can be deduced in the biblical society. Another new perspective in recent feminist scholarship is that Orpah can be perceived as not being to blame, and even praiseworthy in returning home. Four of the writers of the essays considered engage to a significant degree with the figure of Orpah. Firstly, in the 1993 volume, Leila Leah Bronner, in her essay on rabbinic interpretations of the book of Ruth, considers Orpah in discussing the rabbis' concern with the characters' names. Orpah's name, Bronner states, is derived, according to the Midrash, from the nape of the neck, referring, the sages say, to her turning from Naomi. Bronner concludes that the sages regard this departure as the important thing about her (Bronner 155). Bronner points out that the rabbis do not make a definite assessment of Orpah, who is loyal, and obedient to Naomi in returning home, but not as good as Ruth, who disregards Naomi's counsel. The sages invent more stories to interpret the biblical story. Bronner notes that some do so in order to stress Orpah's goodness, although some represent her as the mother of Goliath, who was an enemy of the Israelites. Some even claim that Orpah was promiscuous. In consequence of the range of interpretations, Orpah's character is ambiguous in the rabbinic literature. (Bronner 155-6).

Secondly, also in the 1993 volume, Cynthia Ozick discusses Orpah in some depth, having observed that she is invariably overlooked. She describes Orpah as being, despite her lack of recognition in a book of her own, 'history's great

backdrop', that is, she represents most people who are usual (202). Orpah, Ozick declares, is loving and good. She might have been brought up in a liberal household, in that she was permitted to marry a foreigner. Furthermore, in making this marriage, she showed her superiority in not being prejudiced. She has also experienced widowhood and childlessness (203). According to Ozick, Orpah is not to be blamed for staying at home, where she achieves family happiness (205). It does not matter to her that her gods are false. Moreover, in Moab she need not think how others are managing (205-6).

Thirdly, building on the treatment of Orpah in the 1993 volume, is the work of Laura E. Donaldson in the 1999 volume. She is concerned with native peoples' reading of the Bible, and Ruth in particular. She notes that reading the Bible, besides being associated with destruction of culture, can be on native peoples' own terms (130-1). Here, she cites the work of Rigoberta Menchu of the Quiche Mayan people (131). Donaldson herself addresses the interaction of the biblical narrative of Ruth, Anglo-American imperialism and the values of Cherokee women. She pays attention to native resistance (132). Her starting point is the struggle she recognises in scholars' different readings of the meaning of women in the story (132).

Donaldson begins her treatment of Ruth by drawing attention to the bad reputation of the Moabites, to whose country Elimelech brought his family to avoid starvation. This is particularly significant in view of Elimelech's sons marrying the Moabite women, Ruth and Orpah, although this intermarriage was prohibited. Donaldson points out that the Israelites saw Moabite women especially as giving rise to impurity and evil. She traces this contempt to the incest between Lot and his daughters in Gen. 19. One of the resulting sons was called Moab. Consequently,

according to Donaldson, Ammonites and Moabites were denied access to the Lord's assembly in Deut. 23.3 (Donaldson 133). Donaldson goes on to claim that the perception that Moabite women were sexually dangerous to Israelite men foreshadows the Christian perception of native American women (134). Ruth herself, according to the United States President, Thomas Jefferson, and his colleague, Charles Thomson, resembles forward Indian women in her conduct in Ruth 3.7. According to this reading, men's frigidity results (Donaldson 134-5).

Donaldson investigates the author of Ruth's repeated identification of Ruth with Moab, for example, in Ruth 2.6. Explanations include the view of rabbis that it shows that Ruth was an exemplary convert who rejected wicked Moab (Donaldson 135). Alternatively, according to more recent critics, it reflects that Ruth engaged in 'interethnic bonding' as opposed to conversion (Donaldson 136). In this case, ethnic and cultural harmony resulted (Donaldson 136). This explanation is complicated by the picture of consorting and collaborating of an Aztec woman adduced by Robert Maldonado as being foreshadowed by Ruth (Donaldson 136-7). Donaldson remarks on the investment of Maldonado in cultural and racial mixing, having noted Maldonado's own racially mixed descent. She herself, however, uses the term assimilation with reference to the American Indians (encouraged by Jefferson to mix) and to Ruth. She draws attention to the harmful effects on Cherokee women of intermarriage, since this disrupted their formerly matrilineal society (Donaldson 137-8). Donaldson depicts Ruth's assimilation. She agrees with the view that Ruth disappeared into Boaz's household when Naomi took Obed. That is, she observes, Ruth was fully assimilated as a result of this action of Naomi, when Obed became hers and Boaz's, as proper Jews (Donaldson 138). Like Boaz's mother, Rahab, and

the historical American Indian woman Pocahontas, Ruth aligns herself with those men whom God had directed to eradicate the worship of her people's gods, as stated in Deut. 12.3 (Donaldson 138-40). Donaldson concludes that, according to this comparison, the midrashic view of Ruth as an exemplary convert who rejected wicked Moab is more accurate than Maldonado's interpretation. However, whereas Ruth's conversion makes the Israelites rejoice, it is a cause of sorrow for American Indian women since they identify with Ruth's original culture (Donaldson 140-1). It may be noted that this interpretation of Ruth's assimilation from the point of view of native women is very different from Bernard's reading of her conversion as the successful outcome of trial (RR 85).

Donaldson argues that, by contrast with this story of Ruth's conversion/assimilation, there is a counter-narrative in the book of Ruth which is encouraging to the native reader. This is about Orpah, who returned to her mother's house (Donaldson 141). Donaldson observes that, whereas the majority of modern scholars do not comment on Orpah's decision, she was more discussed in earlier commentary. Here, Donaldson draws on Bronner's interpretation in her essay in the Feminist Companion to Ruth (1993) (see above), that the sages, in their in naming Orpah for her turning from Naomi, evidently regard this departure as the salient thing about her. Donaldson observes that Orpah is thus cast as abandoning. She also mentions Bronner's reference to the negative assertions of Orpah's mothering of Goliath (141-2).

Donaldson then moves on to quote a more positive view of Orpah expressed by a modern scholar, William Phipps. Phipps notes Orpah's ambivalence, and concludes that she prudently goes to her family home where a remarriage will be

arranged for her (142<sup>113</sup>). Donaldson agrees with Phipps but points out that Orpah is not only prudent but also makes a decision to return to 'her mother's house'. She draws on Carol Meyers' discussion of 'the mother's house' in her essay on Ruth 1.8 in the Feminist Companion to Ruth (1993). Thus, Donaldson relates the common characteristics of the biblical passages mentioning 'the mother's house'. She notes that Meyers goes on to claim that biblical mentions of 'the mother's house' give rise to female perspectives on issues that in other places in the Bible are viewed from a male perspective. According to Donaldson, in Ruth the female perspective to which 'the mother's house' gives rise signifies that Orpah is the central character in the story (Donaldson 142). Donaldson goes on to observe that for Cherokee women, as exemplifying native women, Orpah is an inspiration since she chooses her mother's house in preference to another culture, as the Cherokee women's matrilineal traditions instruct them to do. Donaldson remarks on the difference of this reading from more usual readings (143). Certainly, it is different from Bernard's interpretation, for he does not regard Orpah as to any degree exemplary in returning to her homeland.

Donaldson emphasises that in her approach (of re-reading Ruth through the perspective of Cherokee women especially) she has endeavoured to act so as to fulfil the need of American Indian people to discover the meaning of religious terms for Indian people as well as the meaning they could have for all people, a concept she derives from Kimberly Blaeser (143).

Donaldson sums up that her argument is that in coming to a decision regarding parting Orpah bravely affirms herself and her community whereas Ruth abandons her

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<sup>113</sup> Donaldson quotes William E. Phipps, Assertive Biblical Women (Contributions in Women's Studies, 128; Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992), p.53.

social identity. In making this argument, her accordance with Blaeser ‘transforms Ruth’s positive value into a negative and Orpah’s negative value into a positive’ (144). This is far from Bernard’s interpretation.

The fourth essay in which Orpah’s perspective is emphasised is Musa W. Dube’s imaginative piece, also in the 1999 volume and building on the preceding volume, entitled ‘The Unpublished Letters of Orpah to Ruth’. The essay depicts a discussion amongst several people in Botswana which revolves around the positive aspects of the native people’s world before westernisation. However, the stories of the native people are not published. Although Lesedi, one of the characters, writes, there is no publisher who will accept her version of the stories (Dube 145-6). The writer of the passage goes to Lesedi’s room to find newspapers to keep the fire going and finds an article, ‘The Unpublished Letters of Orpah to Ruth’ (Dube 146-7). She sees Orpah as ‘one of us’ – the stories she writes are not published (Dube 147).

Both Donaldson and Dube set their argument or composition regarding Ruth in the context of issues concerning native peoples. This is far from Bernard’s approach, as is Dube’s subsequent laying out of four letters from Orpah to Ruth. The first letter is a novel account of the origin of the Moabites. Lot’s family escaped an earthquake and volcano in Sodom/Gomorrah and fled to Zoar by the Dead Sea. They multiplied, so becoming the Moabite people (Dube 147-8). This account completely avoids the disgrace of the biblical version of the origin of the Moabites (Gen. 19.36-7). The second letter builds on the Jewish view that Ruth was the daughter of King Eglon,<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> This view is expressed by Rashi (BJE 102). The medieval Christian commentator Hugh of St. Cher mentions it, attributing it to the Hebrews (MET 41). Nicholas of Lyra also states this view, attributing it not only to the Hebrews but also to certain Catholics, but rejects it. He does so partly because of inconsistency in the lifespans of the biblical characters. He also points out that the Hebrews and Catholics following Jerome represent Elimelech as being in poverty in Moab, and he claims that the king of Moab would not permit his daughter to descend to poverty through marriage (MET 58). Here, Nicholas disregards Rashi’s assertion that Eglon allowed Ruth to marry Mahlon

but rejects the Jewish interpretation that Elimelech failed to succour his neighbours.<sup>115</sup> According to the letter, four hundred people accompanied Elimelech. Furthermore, King Eglon showed great generosity to them. Only subsequently were Mahlon and Chilion born, about the same time as Orpah and Ruth were born to King Eglon. Elimelech died fighting for Moab, and King Eglon wished his daughters to marry Elimelech's sons, which they did after his death, in the reign of his son Balak (Dube 148-9). This embellishment of the Jewish interpretation sets the scene for the third letter. This letter relates, in contrast to Bernard's not trying to explain precisely how Mahlon and Chilion died, that Mahlon and Chilion murdered King Balak since they desired the throne and were themselves killed by guards. These deaths, unexplained by the guards, prompted Naomi to go back to her homeland. It was right for Ruth and Orpah to go with their grieving, old mother-in-law. Naomi was, in this account, more than a mother-in-law to the sisters; she had mothered them and brought them up, Ruth in particular, who was her child from the age of two. Hence, Ruth's vow to Naomi, that she would go wherever Naomi went. However, the letter proceeds to justify Orpah's returning to her mother's house, as Naomi advised, as well as to defend Ruth's choice. It was wise that they should not all leave Moab. Orpah had to go back to her old mother, who, like Naomi, had no surviving husband or son. Furthermore, it was no less right for her to go back to her people and religion

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because he was an Ephrathite, that is, of noble descent (BJE 102). Lavater repeats Nicholas's rejection of Eglon's willingness to permit his daughter to marry a poor Hebrew or live in poverty, and notes the inconsistency with 'the accmpt of the times' (Lavater 16r). Lavater also evidently refers sarcastically to Rashi's attribution of nobility to the Ephrathites (Lavater 16r-16v).

<sup>115</sup> This interpretation is found in Rashi (BJE 102). The Anonymous Rabbi relates Rashi's interpretation but goes on to reject it on the grounds that Elimelech did not leave Bethlehem-judah because he was selfish but rather on account of the famine, for Naomi returned when she heard that God had visited his people with bread (BJE 114). The medieval Christian commentator Nicholas of Lyra gives Jerome's interpretation that the severity of the famine compelled Elimelech to leave. He goes on, however, to relate the Hebrews' interpretation that Elimelech, who was rich, was harsh towards the poor and left to escape their begging. Elimelech was consequently punished with impoverishment and death. Nicholas does not express a preference for either interpretation (MET 58).



than for Naomi to do so. She has carried out the roles of regent queen and priestess (Dube 149-50). This account differs from Donaldson's discussion of Ruth's and Orpah's choices in that it represents both Ruth and Orpah, rather than Orpah only, as having laudable grounds for their actions.

In the last letter, Orpah speculates about what happened to Ruth and Naomi in Bethlehem, speculation which is answered in the biblical narrative. Orpah herself married a priest, Balaam, and has a son and a daughter, named Lot and Ruth. Contrary to the emphasis on Ruth's conversion in Bernard's commentary, the letter states that she will never be forgotten in Moab. Although she pledged to cleave to Naomi, she will always be Ruth the Moabite, because she cannot be anything else. Ruth should tell her children stories of the Moabites (Dube 150). In these letters then, Dube defends the Moabites, and Orpah in particular. This is by contrast with Bernard, and the depiction of Orpah as fulfilled in Moab is contrary to Lavater's equation of a good outcome for her with conversion.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

It seems useful, in drawing to a conclusion, to situate this edition in relation to the feminist scholarship which has been drawn on in it. Two groups of feminist scholars have been cited in this edition. These are the scholars on Ruth and the scholars of literature concerning early modern women's conduct. Both groups write from the perspective of their own time, that is, the permissive society of the West in the later twentieth century, in which they have, at least, the freedom to express

themselves. Their concerns in their research reflect the development of a feminist movement in their time. However, there is a large difference in the subject matter of the two groups. Early modern society has been much more extensively researched than the biblical society which the modern feminist scholars of Ruth address. Feminist scholars of the early modern period make interpretations which are informed by the survival and study of an extensive range of texts. Accordingly, the claims they make are more restricted by the evidence available to them than is the case with the scholars of Ruth. The latter make stronger claims for female agency. This edition addresses Bernard's commentary in the light of modern scholarship on the early modern period. In particular, it aspires to address conduct issues, as returned to below in this Conclusion, to make a contribution to the work of the modern feminist scholars who engage with literature concerning the conduct of early modern women.

The feminist scholars of Ruth, when addressing this book, may also be compared with their early modern counterparts. In this case, the societies to which the two groups belong, and therefore the perspectives from which they write, are very different. This contrast is the reason for introducing the feminist scholars of Ruth to this edition, that is, by this means the distinctiveness of the approaches of the early modern commentators to Ruth are highlighted. The feminists, besides their feminist agenda, bring to their task a variety of resources and techniques. Several of them utilise the scholarship of Sasson's recent translation. Furthermore, some of the techniques of analysis which they employ were developed in modern times. For instance, Meyers draws on anthropological ethnographic studies to investigate how women's informal groups might have operated in Ruth. Again, Fischer employs an

intertextual approach, and Donaldson and Dube relate Ruth to issues concerning native peoples. In the same way as these feminists' approaches are anchored in the times in which they write, so the early modern commentators on Ruth draw on the resources available to them, and were preoccupied with the issues of their times. It has been the aim of this edition to explain, in the Introduction and in the annotations, Bernard's concerns as a partly conforming Puritan clergyman and the early modern context of his commentary.

The principal interest of Ruths Recompence in the present edition, then, is Bernard's discussion of the conduct of the women in the story, particularly his treatment of Naomi's and Ruth's conduct in chapter 3. Ruth's daring approach to Boaz by night to request marriage gives rise to great anxiety in Bernard, as in Lavater and Topsell. The commentators go to great lengths to classify Ruth's example in this act. They also emphasise the importance of not causing offence to others by indiscretion. Their anxiety reflects the discordance of Ruth's act with the values expressed in the voluminous literature in the early modern period which addresses the issue of women's conduct. This moral regulation of women, who were inferior to men in Bernard's hierarchical society, governs his approach to the way the women in Ruth act. The prescriptive literature and the inferiority of women are discussed in the Introduction. This context is meant to show how Bernard comes to the evaluations he makes, and to indicate the restrictions on early modern women and the degree to which they might be able to follow the assertive actions of Ruth and Naomi.

Besides the significant conduct issue in chapter 3, the women's conduct in chapters 1 and 2 is also seen to challenge Lavater, Topsell and Bernard. The edition

draws attention to how Bernard, in particular, elaborates models of ideal female conduct in chapters 1 and 2 especially. However, it is also shown that Bernard, like Lavater and Topsell, represents the women as acting boldly in chapter 1, and identifies this with their piety. This would be consistent with the commentators recognising the merit of such conduct in women in their own society, as demonstrated by Peter Lake. More questionable for these commentators, however, it is pointed out, is Ruth's enterprise in going out gleaning in chapter 2, which they see as putting her chastity in jeopardy. Thus, the edition shows that the women's conduct in all the first three chapters causes the commentators difficulties, although chapter 3 is a much more extreme case.

A significant aspect of this edition is the comparison of Bernard's interpretation with those of his predecessors, particularly in the early modern period, but also ancient interpreters, together with medieval Jewish and Christian commentators. This approach makes clearer Bernard's contribution to the tradition of commentary on Ruth. In particular, one significant contribution is the structure of the work, which derives from Bernard's preaching theory, as detailed in The Faithfull Shepheard (1607, 1621). This structure has components – notably, uses of doctrines and prevention of objections – which allow Bernard to address in a systematic way many issues which concern him. Especially pertinently, in referring to Lavater and Topsell, this edition provides a broader picture of early modern views on women. In particular, Ruth's conduct in chapter 3 is shown to be extremely problematic for these three early modern commentators.

In general this edition endeavours to make Bernard's text accessible, and to make a more comprehensive interpretation of it than the nineteenth-century editor,

Alexander Balloch Grosart, whose edition is discussed in some detail in the Textual Introduction. Here, it will suffice to say that Grosart makes quite a thorough account of Bernard's publications in his introductory section. However, he does not provide extensive annotations, and he does not address the principal focus of the present edition – the conduct of the women in Ruth, particularly Ruth's conduct in chapter 3. The present edition sets Ruths Recompence in a much more comprehensive context than Grosart's, thus helping to show how valuable this book is as an indicator of seventeenth century English society.

## TEXTUAL INTRODUCTION

### 1. GENERAL

The main objective in obtaining a text of Bernard's commentary on Ruth for this edition was to reproduce the original as closely as possible at the same time as making the work intelligible to the modern reader. The original used was a copy of the 1628 edition purchased through the internet. It was decided to use Optical Character Recognition (OCR) Software on the computer to produce a version of the main body of the book, which could then be provided with margin notes, annotations and references, and editorial footnotes. The OCR chosen was the Abbyy Finereader OCR XIX, which is designed for the recognition of Old English Texts (it is also capable of reading Gothic Script, but this facility was not required for this purpose).

### 2. EVALUATION OF THE OCR

The initial product of the OCR required editing and showed a number of errors on each page. To assess the extent and nature of the errors, from page 280 in the 1628 edition onwards two pages every 50 were selected and details of the errors on each page were noted. This gave a total of 8 pages for analysis, pages 280, 281, 330, 331, 380, 381, 430 and 431.

Page No.	280	281	330	331	380	381	430	431
Total Errors	21	21	27	17	15	25	18	37

Total errors for 8 pages – 181. Mean number of errors per page – 23.

Single letter errors <sup>116</sup>	12	14	11	14	8	9	6	7
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Total single letter errors – 81. Mean number of errors per page – 10.

Certain letters in particular are not correctly recognised. Of the 81 single letter errors, failure to produce ‘s’ in modern English accounts for 28, ‘t’ for 12, ‘e’ for 8, and ‘f’ for 5.

The ‘s’ errors are sometimes due to the failure to translate the old English long ‘s’ into ‘s’.

The ‘e’ and ‘t’ errors are due to the poor definition in the printing of these letters in the book which often results in ‘c’ for ‘e’ and ‘i’ for ‘t’.

Other errors include errors in spacing. For example, words are merged together. Also, proper names are often printed incorrectly as the OCR cannot recognise them.

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<sup>116</sup> A single letter error is a misidentification of only one letter in a word.

On the whole, the OCR does a good job and errors are easily corrected (although correcting is time consuming) in the OCR itself or after transfer to Word.

However, a few pages of the text could not be read by the OCR. This was because print shows through from the other side of the page. These pages were copied by eye, as was the Dedicatory Epistle since the OCR was not successful in reading the italic of which it largely consists. These pages which the OCR could not read have been marked with an asterisk, \*. They are pages 269, 272, 301, 304, 319, 370, 382, 383.

### **3. EDITORIAL DECISIONS**

Editorial decisions which apply to frequent instances in the text are stated here; decisions which pertain to single or only occasional occurrences, however, are noted in footnotes.

#### **3.1. ISSUES RELATING TO LAYOUT**

This edition does not reproduce the layout of the 1628 text. The pages are larger in size, catchwords in the 1628 edition are ignored, and end of line hyphens are not retained. These decisions have been taken to enhance the readability. Enhanced readability is also the reason for the following modification, which is mentioned in the context of layout although it also involves emphasis and capitalisation. In the 1628 edition, in accordance with contemporary typography, the



initial words in the exposition of chapters and verses have an enlarged non italic first letter and capital second letter. In the present edition, these words are indented, the whole word is italic or non italic, and the letters after the first letter are lower case. This is also consistent with modern usage. Where readability is not an issue, an attempt has been made to follow the original: the address to the Countess of Warwick in the Epistle Dedicatory is centred, as is the title of the commentary at the beginning. The title page in the present edition is a photographic image of the 1628 edition title page in a Word document.

### **3.2. DECISIONS ABOUT SPELLING AND ABBREVIATIONS**

The first issue concerns printing convention rather than spelling per se: consonantal ‘i’ and ‘u’ and vocalic ‘j’ and ‘v’ are altered to ‘j’, ‘v’, ‘i’, and ‘u’ respectively. Furthermore, ‘vv’ is printed as ‘w’. Long ‘s’ is printed as the modern ‘s’. Regarding spelling, that of the 1628 edition is retained.

Square brackets, used to indicate editorial changes, indicate the following issues of spelling. Uncertain letters are enclosed in square brackets. In cases where it seems that a letter has simply been omitted (for example, ‘hm’, p. 7; ‘unjusty’, p. 24), the word is corrected and the inserted letter is enclosed in square brackets. Conversely, in the instance on p. 256, where ‘an’ is misprinted ‘and’, the word ‘an’ is put in square brackets. When a letter is misprinted (for example, ‘uote’, p. 410), it is corrected with the replacement letter or correction of wrongly ordered letters (for example, ‘obejcting’, p. 146) in square brackets. Misprinted numbers (see the margin reference on p. 209) are treated the same way.

Contractions of words indicated by a mark over a letter preceding the omission of letters are expanded silently. The ampersand in the 1628 edition (and the decorative variation in italic print) is replaced by the word ‘and’, or by the word ‘et’ in Latin passages. This is for fluency and elegance of expression. Similarly ‘&c’ is replaced by ‘etcetera’. The shortening of words ‘Chapter’ and ‘verses’ to ‘Chap.’, ‘Cha.’ or ‘Ch.’ and ‘verse.’ and also ‘Question’ to ‘Quest.’ And ‘Answer’ to ‘Answ.’ is replaced with the full word. Such abbreviations of Latin words are similarly expanded. Numerals such ‘2’ occurring elsewhere than in biblical references (for example, on p. 41) are replaced by the full word for them, such as ‘two’, where this change enhances readability.

### **3.3. DECISIONS ABOUT EMPHASIS, CAPITALISATION AND PUNCTUATION**

The use of emphasis (that is, normal or italic type) of words in the 1628 edition is retained. The 1628 edition uses emphasis to draw attention to a passage as well as to indicate proper names. The original capitalisation of the first letters of certain words is also retained. The capitals in the first part of the address to the Countess of Warwick in the Epistle Dedicatory and in the title of the commentary at the beginning are also retained. Capitals are only replaced by lower case letters and emphasis altered in initial words of expositions of chapters and verses in the interests of readability, as mentioned in 2.2 above. Where the emphasis is a misprint, however, (for example ‘it’, p. 427), it is corrected, and the corrected letter(s) are enclosed in square brackets.

In general, the punctuation of the 1628 edition is retained. This is so even in cases where the 1628 edition does not conform to modern usage, for example, when a semicolon or a colon is followed by a capital letter, or when a question mark or exclamation mark is followed by a lower case letter. This policy is followed because in these instances the sense is not obscured. Similarly, the usual practice in the 1628 edition of not inserting possessive apostrophes is retained. However, the punctuation is modified in certain instances to clarify the sense (as on p. 54, where commas are omitted). Such changes are identified in footnotes.

Other editorial changes to punctuation indicate uncertain punctuation, are corrections, or are done to make the format of references and notes consistent. Punctuation marks which cannot easily be read are enclosed in square brackets (for example, the uncertain comma on the second last line of p. 14). Where it seems that a punctuation mark has been omitted (for example the margin note ‘1 Sam. 45’ on p. 413), the punctuation mark is inserted, enclosed in square brackets. When a punctuation mark is misprinted (for example, ‘Gen. 23.7.12’ in the margin note on p. 168), it is corrected with the replacement punctuation mark in square brackets. Punctuation is applied to abbreviated words which have been expanded (for example, the margin note on p. 325, expanded from ‘Sueton. Tit.’ to ‘Suetonius, Titus Vespasian’). The full stop with which Bernard follows numbers has been routinely omitted, being replaced by a comma if the sense requires it.

The basic style of printing lemmata in the 1628 edition is followed. In general, the lemmata, which are in italic, begin with a capital letter and end with a full stop followed by a square bracket, ]. The square bracket distinguishes lemmata from the emphasised parts of Bernard’s exposition. In instances where the punctuation at the

end of the lemma is not a full stop, but a comma or semicolon, the following policy is adopted. If Bernard is evidently including the lemma in his sentence which he goes on to complete, then this punctuation is retained (see, for example, pp. 143, 271). However, if there is a new sentence after the lemma, this punctuation is silently changed to a full stop (for example, p. 476, where the revised punctuation is consistent with the practice of the 1628 edition on the preceding pages).

The 1628 edition is not always consistent in its use of Roman and italic punctuation, and in this edition inconsistencies are eliminated. The main body of the text in the 1628 edition is set in Roman type, and punctuation in the present edition is therefore normally Roman. When, however, punctuation occurs inside an italic phrase or sentence, or at the end of a complete italic sentence, the punctuation too is italic. The dedication and biblical verses and lemmata are set in italic type in the 1628 edition, and the same principle is followed in the present edition: punctuation is normally italic, except when, in the dedication, punctuation occurs inside a Roman phrase. But note that where emphasis is used to indicate a word such as a proper name, a sequence of such words is not a phrase, and Roman punctuation is used consistently in the present edition to separate these words in the main body of the text, or of course italic punctuation in the dedication.

### **3.4 DECISIONS ABOUT MARGINAL NOTES, TEXTUAL FOOTNOTES AND BIBLICAL REFERENCES**

The shorter marginal notes in the 1628 edition, which mainly consist of biblical references, are placed at the appropriate point in the main text within angle brackets,

< >. The textual footnotes are all editorial except any which are longer marginal notes in the 1628 edition, indicated in the present edition by [B] at the end. Any notes clearly derived from the nineteenth-century editor, Grosart, have [Grosart] at the end. Footnotes pertaining to marginal notes within angle brackets are inserted at the relevant place inside the angle brackets.

All biblical references are set out according to MLA guidelines rather than in the style of the 1628 edition for ease of reference. The punctuation of biblical references is consistent with the punctuation policy expressed above regarding the full stop with which Bernard follows numbers. That is, biblical references, each being concluded with a full stop in the 1628 edition, are separated from words following by commas, if punctuation is needed. If a semicolon is used, this is referred to in a textual footnote. Biblical references forming a series are separated from each other by semicolons so as to enhance clarity.

Bernard gives a very large number of biblical references, and some are inaccurate. In this edition, these errors have been corrected in footnotes. Sometimes, Bernard does not supply a biblical reference. In such cases, the reference is supplied in this edition if it cannot be assumed to be general knowledge and if it has not occurred previously in the text. Bernard's practice is to refer to Ruth by chapter and verse alone. Since this practice does not give rise to any confusion, it is not altered in this edition. For biblical books with only one chapter Bernard sometimes supplies the word 'Verse' in the biblical reference (for example, 2 John Verse 4 on p. 446 of the 1628 edition). This practice has been applied in this edition even where Bernard does not apply it (for example, in this edition Philem. Verse 22 replaces Philem. 22 on p. 444 of the 1628 edition).

### **3.5. DECISIONS ABOUT ANNOTATIONS AND INTRODUCTION**

The annotations in this edition draw attention to Bernard's application of the biblical text to issues and to assumptions current in his own time, drawing particular attention to the strategies he adopts towards elements in Ruth which are at odds with his ideology. The annotations also illustrate how Bernard differs from or develops the discussions of his predecessors.

Certain editorial decisions apply to both the annotations and the Introduction. Where quotations have been transcribed from other early modern sources than Bernard's commentary on Ruth, similar editing policy has been applied, for example in exchanging 'u' and 'v'. Also, if a page reference, preceded by 'p.' is given without a full in-text citation, it is to Bernard's text.

## **4. HOW THIS EDITION DIFFERS FROM GROSART'S**

### **4.1. GROSART'S EDITION**

Alexander B[alloch] Grosart's editorship of the edition of Bernard's commentary on Ruth previous to the present one, published in 1865, is evident from the fact that his name appears at the end of the introductory section entitled 'Richard Bernard'. Grosart (1827-1899) was a Presbyterian minister and scholar who reprinted many Elizabethan and Jacobean works. His edition of Bernard's

commentary was one of a number of reprints he issued of works by Puritan divines. However, Grosart's work has met with criticism, even by his contemporaries. For example, one critic, W.H.O. Smeaton, claimed that Grosart's critical work had shortcomings (Sherbo, ODNB). Grosart's contribution to Bernard's commentary on Ruth can be seen in the introductory section on Richard Bernard, the title page, the text of the commentary and the footnotes.

In the introductory section, Grosart, besides providing biographical information about Bernard, makes a few remarks showing his impression of the commentary. He observes:

You read the present reprint of an exposition of 'Ruth;' and as you feel refreshed as with the blowing of bean-blossom-scented breezes in your evening walk, you fancy its author as a 'gentle spirit,' living apart from the crowd in cloistered piety, the *pastor* of some small rural flock, bringing the odours of kine and grass into some antique village church.  
(314)

Grosart's declaration of the impression the commentary makes and his depiction of Bernard give no indication of the difficulty Bernard finds particularly in the threshing floor episode, Ruth chapter 3 in interpreting the text of Ruth to his hearers and readers. This may reflect his anticipated 19<sup>th</sup> century readership. Grosart again remarks on the commentary at the end of the introductory section, when he claims that it demonstrates all Bernard's strengths, being 'expository, doctrinal, practical, "savoury," and full of living applications to everyday experience and life' (322-3). Once more, he is silent about the difficulties caused by the women's conduct and the strategies Bernard employs to address them.

Grosart does not discuss which copy of Bernard's commentary on Ruth he chose as the basis of his text. He merely remarks that the commentary has 'hitherto been excessively rare and costly'. (323).

The title page of Grosart's edition of the commentary is printed in capital letters, by contrast with the mixture of capital letters, italics and small letters in the 1628 title page. The spelling is completely modernised. Furthermore, the statements focusing on Ruth's life and conduct in the 1628 title page are omitted. The publication information relates to the circumstances of publication in 1865.

The pages of the text of the commentary (numbered in two sequences, one being part of the volume's page numbering and one beginning at the Epistle Dedicatory<sup>117</sup>) have a vertical division in the middle and footnotes are at the bottom of the column of text containing the symbol they relate to. The Epistle Dedicatory is in ordinary print by contrast with the italics in the 1628 edition. Less emphasis is used in it compared with 1628 – for example, people's names and places are not emphasised. In the commentary as a whole, spelling is almost completely modernised and some capitals in the 1628 edition are changed to small letters. There are some modifications in the punctuation. Again, some of the emphasis in the 1628 edition is dispensed with. In some instances, biblical references and Hebrew and Greek words occurring in the margins of the 1628 edition are incorporated in the text. The actual content is very accurate.

The footnotes are almost all taken from margin notes in the 1628 edition, with some modifications. The modifications are generally clarifications by Grosart. For example, Grosart on p. 381 expands 'Mar. Buc.' of p. 212 of the 1628 edition to 'Martin Bucer'. Again, on p. 410 he replaces 'Sueton. Tit.' of p. 325 of the 1628 edition with 'Sueton. in vita [circumflex over a]'. Also, on p. 448 he expands the

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<sup>117</sup> Where Grosart's edition is referred to in the present edition, page references are to the sequence which is part of the volume's page numbering. The other page numbers can be calculated from the fact that the first page of the Epistle Dedicatory (p. 1 in this sequence) is p. 325 in the volume's page numbering.



contractions in the Latin on pp. 472-3 of the 1628 edition. Moreover, he replaces some Arabic numerals by Roman numerals. Grosart also corrects the margin note on p. 188 of the 1628 edition by giving the reference Gen. xxiv. 67. instead of Gen. 24. 64 on p. 75 [misprint for 375].

Grosart also makes some footnotes of his own, which conclude in –ED. I count 9 of these. These footnotes do not give bibliographic information to support their content. This is not required since they simply have an explanatory or informative function, or suggest misprints in the 1628 edition. The editorial footnote on p. 345 identifies the Ishmael in the text as Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, Jer. xli. The editorial footnote on p. 349 suggests that ‘Naomi’ should replace ‘Ruth’ in the text. The editorial footnote on p. 363 supplies a biblical reference. The editorial footnote on p. 368 suggests that the statement in the text, ‘Women must company with women, and yet some not with any of that sex’ should rather contain the words, ‘with some, not any’. The editorial footnote on p. 374 suggests that ‘Eli’ should replace ‘Samuel’ in the text. The editorial footnote on p. 384 suggests that ‘they’ in the text should be replaced by we’. The editorial footnote on p. 402 suggests that ‘contemptuous’ should replace ‘contemptible’. The editorial footnote on p. 428 explains that ‘mark’ in the text means ‘traffic’ and adds ‘hence “market”’ Finally, the editorial footnote on p. 443 explains that ‘but of’ in the text means ‘without’. It can be concluded from the small number and simplicity of the footnotes that Grosart’s work is not a critical edition.

#### 4.2. THIS EDITION

The methodology of the present edition both builds on and diverges from that of Grosart. Grosart is followed on occasion in his rendering of biblical references. His practice of using the Hebrew version of the name of scriptural book is adopted, whereas the 1628 edition sometimes uses the Greek Septuagint name (for example, Esdras for Ezra on p. 27). This is consistent with MLA conventions for the names of biblical books, and hence with the policy adopted of following the MLA format for biblical references. However, the present edition is meant to be closer to the original than Grosart's, for example in retaining the original's spelling and emphasis, that is, italic or non italic print.

The introduction and annotations of the present edition attempt to provide a much more extensive explanatory and contextual framework for Bernard's text than is found in Grosart's edition, and bibliographic information is given. The main emphasis of the present edition on the early modern commentator's engagement with the issues of women's conduct in chapter 3 is not addressed by Grosart. Unlike Grosart's, this edition is a critical edition.

**An Edition of Richard Bernard's Ruths Recompence**  
**Arlene McAlister**

**Volume 2. The annotated text and bibliography**

**PhD**

**The University of Edinburgh**

**2012**



*Ruths Recompence:*  
OR  
A COMMENT-  
TARIE VPON  
THE BOOKE OF  
RVTH:

WHEREIN IS SHEWED HER  
HAPPY CALLING OVT OF HER OWNE  
Country and People, into the fellowship and  
society of the Lords Inheritance:

HER VERTVOVS LIFE AND  
holy Carriage amongst them:

AND THEN, HER REWARD IN GODS  
mercy, being by an honourable Marriage made  
a Mother in Israel:

Deliuered in seuerall Sermons, the brieife summe  
whereof is now published for the benefit of the  
Church of God.

By Richard Bernard, *Preacher of Gods Word at Bat-*  
*combe in Sommerfet-shire.*



LONDON  
Printed by *Felix Kyngston*, and are to be sold by  
*Simon Waterfon.* 1628.



[sig. A2r\*] TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE AND VERY VERTUOUS LADY,  
 the Lady FRANCIS [sic], Countesse of *Warwick, Dowager*, the increase of all saving  
 Graces, and the fruition of that eternall blisse with the Saints in glory, is heartily  
 wished.<sup>1</sup>

*Right Honourable Lady,*

*Though a Woman was the Mother of all mans miserie; yet of a Woman came  
 salvation, to bring us out of that estate unto Grace and Glory; and for womens  
 comfort, God of his mercy hath beene pleased to make their Sexe renowned in many  
 examples.<sup>2</sup> To some he hath given supernaturall knowledge, by enduing them with  
 the Spirit of Prophecie, as Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, and Annah. Upon other some  
 he hath bestowed singular wisdom, as upon the woman of Tekoah, and the wise  
 [sig. A2v\*] woman of Abel, in Bethmaacah. Rare was the faith of many, as the faith  
 of Sarah, of Rahab, of the widdow of Sarepta, and of the Canaanitish woman; who  
 have put on better resolutions, and greater courage for the Church in the time of  
 perill, then some men have done. Did not Deborah encourage Barak to the warres,  
 adventuring her selfe with him, when otherwise he without her was afraid to go?  
 Did not Jael, the wife of Heber, kill the great Captaine and Generall Sisera? And  
 who more resolved to jeopard her life for Gods people, then beautifull Ester, with her  
 If I perish, I perish?*

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<sup>1</sup> The Introduction section 4.2.2 considers the significance of Bernard's dedicating the commentary to a woman who (as he goes on to acknowledge in this dedicatory epistle) was his patron.

<sup>2</sup> Bernard deploys Eve and the Virgin Mary to introduce a very full listing of good women in the Bible. Since it is essentially a simple list, it seems appropriate in this instance to refer the reader to a concordance. The significance of this listing is considered in the Introduction section 4.2.2.

*Have there not been of them famous in many other things? For attention to the Word, as the Virgin Marie and Lydia. For going farre for knowledge, as the Queene of Sheba to heare the wisdom of Salomon. For workes of charitie, as Dorcas. For workes of piety, helping forward the building of the Tabernacle, as were many women <Exod. 35.21-2, 29>. For fervency in prayer, as Hannah. For daily devotion in fasting and prayer, as Anna. For entertainment of Gods Messengers, as the Shunamite, as Lydia, and one Mary <Rom. 16.6>. For the feare of God, as the Mid-wives of Egypt. For courtesie to a meere stranger, as Rebecca. For humilitie and patience, as old Naomi. Who can out-strip Ruth in love? Are there not recorded not meane ones onely, but also honourable personages for Religion and Grace? as wee may reade in the Acts 17.4, 12. Will a Dionysius become a beleever in an Universitie, from among the Athenians? You shall finde a Damaris to second him.*

*In what have men been renowned, wherein some [sig. A3r\*] women (according, yea, and beyond the nature of their Sex) have not been remarkable? in Wisdom, Faith, Charitie, love of the Word, love to Gods Messengers, fervent affection, and desire of heavenly things? If men have suffered imprisonment, cruell persecution, and Bands for Christ, were women behind? No verily, Acts 8.3 and 9.2.*

*Nay, have they not in somewhat excelled men sometimes? Who entertained Christ so much, and so often as Martha and Mary? Who are noted to contribute to Christs necessities, but women? Luke 8.3. Who (saving John the Apostle) followed Christ to his Crosse, lamenting and weeping, but women? Who of all the ordinary followers of Christ observed where Christ was buried, but women <Luke 24.24>? Who first went to his Sepulcher with sweet spices to anoint Christs body, but women <Mark 16.1-2>? We may reade of a Congregation of women, to whom Saint Paul*



*preached, being gathered together to the accustomed place of prayer, as more forward, as it may seeme at that time, then men <Acts 16.13>.*

*It would be tedious to repeate by name all the notable women in the holy Scriptures, and their excellent graces; yet can I not let passe Priscilla her knowledge with her husband Aquila in the ministerie of the Gospell, able to teach an eloquent Apollos; nor Loys and Eunice, Trayners up of the famous Evangelist Timothie in the holy Scriptures; nor Persis, which laboured much in the Lord, as many other women did <Phil. 4.3>. Not to stand upon more instances, one thing for their more worthy praises, is to be observed, and not to bee forgotten; I have read of men well esteemed of to have been Apostates, as Demas, Alexander, Phyletus, [sig. A3v\*] and others; but of never a woman by name, once reckoned among the Saints in all the new Testament; this is singular glorie.*

*But the Lord hath not thought it enough to honor women thus, by endowing them with excellent gifts, and by their praise-worthy works, but also hee hath graced them otherwise. To whom did Christ first manifest himself after his resurrection, but unto women? Of what act did ever Christ so speake, to make it perpetually famous, as that of the woman, that powred upon him an Alabaster box of oyntment, promising that wheresoever the Gospell should bee preached in the whole world, there should her worke bee remembred <Matt. 26.7, 17<sup>3</sup>>? Hath not also the Lord directed his Penmen, and by name his beloved Apostle, to write an Epistle unto an Elect Lady? And are there not whole books of Scripture dedicated to their names, as this of Ruth, and the other of Ester, for an eternall remembrance of them?*

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<sup>3</sup> The correct reference is Matt. 26.7, 13.

*I hope (Right Honourable Lady) therefore, that I may bee bold to present your Honour with this my Commentary upon Ruth, which you may challenge of right before all others, for your bountifull and liberall contribution towards my maintenance in the Universitie of Cambridge, by the which I am now that I am; and for which, as also for your Honours ever-continuing favours to mee and mine, I remaine everlastingly a debtor.*

*Accept therefore, I humbly beseech your Honour, this my best testimonie of all dutifull services, and of the acknowledgement of my most thankfull remembrance of the same. And my hearty and daily prayer is, that the Lord would blesse your Honor, that as both [sig. A4r\*] you have intended, and also begun good works, so you may goe on with encrease therein to the end; it beeing the greatest honour before God and men, to bee great and rich in good works, for which you shall have, for the present, many peoples prayers; for the time to come, of mindfull posterities, also great praises; and withall in heaven (which is the best of all) reward with God; who ever preserve your Honour in all happy peace and prosperitie.*

Batcombe,  
March 22.

*Your Honours ever bounden  
to be commanded,*

Richard Bernard.

[p. 1] RUTHS *Recompence*:

OR,

A COMMENTARIE

UPON THE BOOKE OF

RUTH.

*The booke of RUTH.*] This is the title of this part of Scripture: and hereby is shewed of whom it chiefly intreateth, even of *Ruth*, the vertuous and godly young woman and widow, a Heathen and Idolater by her countrey and birth, but by the Lords call a gracious Saint at length, a mother in Israel, and one of whom Christ came. The titles of the Bookes of holy Writ, shew either the principall matter thereof, as *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, *Numbers*, *Psalmes*, *Proverbs*, and many other, or who were the Pen-men, as the Bookes of *Samuel*, *Esdras*, or what person chiefly is there spoken of, as *Job*, *Ester*, *Nehemiah*, and *Ruth* here; who though but a woman, and of that weake sexe, yet [p. 2] being truly religious, see how the Lord doth her honour to all posterities: a singular incouragement unto vertue and godlinesse.

Who penned this, is not certaine: but certaine it is by the Genealogie, Chapter 4.18, 22, that the Scribe lived in *Davids* time, and therefore is it held to be *Samuels* by some. But it is not necessary ever to know the Penners of every booke of Scripture, especially of Historicall and Dogmaticall, whose truth and authority depend not upon the writer or speaker, as Propheticall bookes doe, but upon the veritie of the things spoken, and written. The Scribes name is concealed, the Lords

pleasure was not to have it mentioned, and therefore after hidden things wee will not make further enquirie, especially in a matter of no more moment.<sup>4</sup>

The booke is divided into foure Chapters, being, as it were, the parts of the booke: the first sheweth *Ruths* journeying to Judah, with the occasions thereto, and causes thereof: the second, her entertainment, and her carriage and paines there: the third, her contract with *Boaz*, a Noble man of Bethlehem, and how it was procured: and the fourth, her solemne marriage, with the joyfull issue thereof.

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<sup>4</sup> Bernard follows the example of earlier commentators on *Ruth*, Ludwig Lavater (*Lavater* 1v-2v) and Edward Topsell (*Topsell* 1-2) in speculating about authorship, and explains his reasons for doing so in *The Faithfull Shepheard*: ‘The text read, the Teacher is to resolve his Scripture, to laie it open to the hearers: as First, the Author of the words’ (FS 20). However, in this instance, Bernard concludes that the authorship, which cannot be determined, is unimportant.

## [p. 3] CHAPTER I.

This chapter telleth us how *Ruth* came to Bethlehem, who being married to a mans sonne of Judah, in her owne countrey, for the grace of Religion in her heart, and the love shee bare to her mother in law, after the death of her husband and father in law, forsooke her people, countrey, and idolatrie, and went into the Land of Judah, to dwell with Gods people, and came thither with her mother in law, in the beginning of Barley harvest.<sup>5</sup>

Verse 1. *And it came to passe in the dayes when the Judges ruled, that there was a famine in the Land, and a certaine man of Bethlehem Judah went to sojourn in the Countrey of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sonnes.*

This verse is an entrance into the Story, and is the description of a journey: and therein note, when, upon what occasion, from whence, whither, and who tooke it in hand, and with what company he finished it.<sup>6</sup>

*And it came to passe.*<sup>7</sup>] To wit, by the hand and providence of God. Thus he beginneth this History, to note a *speciall hand of God in all this businesse, beyond mans purpose and thought*, in bringing a famine, and in *Elimelechs* going into Moab,

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<sup>5</sup> This summary indicates that Bernard, like the preceding early modern commentators, Lavater and Topsell, is concerned exclusively with the literal sense of the story, in contrast to the allegorical interpretations found in medieval commentaries.

<sup>6</sup> This kind of application of logical analysis is characteristic of Bernard's expository method.

<sup>7</sup> Bernard works systematically through the entire text of *Ruth*, analysing and amplifying each phrase or lemma, and where possible deriving doctrines from this process. For Bernard's method see the Introduction section 4.2.2.

to take a wife for his sonne, even this *Ruth*, to make [p. 4] her a mother in Israel: and therefore are we diligently to marke the providence of God in reading this Storie.<sup>8</sup>

*In the dayes when the Judges ruled.]* This telleth us, when this happened; In historicall narrations the time with other circumstances are set downe, for more credit to the Story, Judg. 1.1; 2 Sam. 1.1; 1 Kings 1.1. As in humane Stories this is observed, so here in Divine. Thus God in mercy descendeth to us, for the better confirmation of our weake faith, for which hee is to be praised. We may note out of these words:

I. *That the Israelites were ever under government*, under *Moses*, *Joshua*, the Judges, and then Kings: this was needefull, to prevent disorder and confusion of State, when men are not under rule and government: for then will every one doe what he listeth, Judg. 18 and 20.<sup>9</sup> Which condemneth Anarchie and all loose liberty, destruction to Church and Common-wealth.

II. *That their government was first by Judges* <Josephus in *Antiquitates Judaicae*, liber 4, caput 8, de *Aristocratia*>, that they might see the Lords extraordinarie hand in this governing of them, 1 Sam. 8.6-7,<sup>10</sup> and that they might not

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<sup>8</sup> God's providence can work in mysterious ways, and emphasising this assists Bernard when Ruth fails to conform to contemporary views of good conduct in women. He is none the less clear that wrongdoing is always to be reprov'd, even when there is a good outcome (see p. 18). For providence see the Introduction section 3.

<sup>9</sup> Bernard does not make altogether clear that the final chapters of *Judges* narrate an exception to his statement that '*the Israelites were ever under government*'.

<sup>10</sup> These references from 1 Sam. 8, together with Bernard's allusion at the end of this passage to the people bringing themselves into bondage, invite consideration of this biblical chapter. It relates Samuel's reluctance to comply with the Israelites' demand for a king and his consultation with God on the matter. This biblical account is reinforced in Josephus's *Antiquities of the Jews* following the rendering of aristocratic government as recommended by Moses in Book 4 Section 8, referred to by the marginal reference given by Bernard here: 'you need no supreme governor but God. But if you shall desire a king, let him [. . .] not have a great number of wives, nor pursue after abundance of riches, nor a multitude of horses, whereby he may grow too proud to submit to the laws. And if he affect any such things, let him be restrained, lest he become so potent that his state be inconsistent with your welfare' (Josephus [Whiston] 77). These passages would help to legitimate the republicanism which surfaced in the 1640s. Bernard's observation that 'They loaded not the people with heave burthens to mainetaine great State' may well be an implied criticism of Charles I's policies.

bee as other Nations, 1 Sam. 8.5, nor in bondage, 1 Sam. 8.9, 18. These Judges were raised up for the most part extraordinarily, to shew more fully the Lords care of his people, they were worthy and excellent men, not all of the same Tribe and Family, but sometime of one, then of another: they ruled not by tyranny, or the advice of man, but by the counsell and guidance of God; They loaded [p. 5] not the people with heavie burthens to mainetaine great State: In their daies, they sought the welfare of the people, the glory of God, not their owne wills and pleasures to rule after their owne lusts. They would not raigne themselves, but the Lord, as *Gideon* said, should raigne over the people <Judg. 8.23>. Thus happily did the Lord provide for his people, till they did shake off his yoake, and brought themselves into bondage: for so it falleth out, if men like not of Gods choyce, he leaveth them to their owne, of which they shall bee sure to repent.

III. *That such as be set over a people, are to rule them, but yet in judgement:* for the Hebrew word translated *Ruled*, is *Judged*, and Rulers were to judge, 1 Sam. 7.15. And this must they doe, even labour wisely to rule and governe in judgement. They are to rule, to maintaine their authority, which else will lie, through contempt, in the dust, and they must doe it in judgement, that equitie may be upheld, and nothing be done rashly, partially, and to the hurt of innocencie.

*That there was a famine.*] This might happen many waies by the incursion of Forraine enemies, by civill warres among themselves, or by restraint of seasonable showres from heaven: howsoever it came, sinne was the cause thereof: for wee may reade in the time of these Judges, howsoever they themselves did valiantly, and right worthily in Israel, yet the people would run into many mischiefes, so as we by

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It is likely that Bernard refers to the complete works of Josephus in Latin, published in Geneva in 1595.

searching, may find these evils among them: A toleration [p. 6] of Idolaters, and publike Monuments of Idolatrie, *Judg.* 1.21, 27, 29-30 and 3.5 and 2.2, contrary to Gods expresse Commandement by the hand of *Moses*. They sell themselves unto idolatry, Chapter 2.11-13, 17 and 8.27, for but tolerate it in others first, then we like it at length in our selves, as many examples witnesse. They would defend it, and that with bloodshed, Chapter 6.30, for Idolaters are of a murtherous disposition, as their *god-Devill* is, whome they worship, as *Manasses*, *Joash*, *Jehoram*, and other Kings doe manifestly declare, and as wee have experimentally found at the hands of Papists. See heere a toleration first, then an approbation, then an open defence of an idolatrous worship; and when this is once on foote, what darkenesse doth not overspread?<sup>11</sup> They did what themselves listed, Chapter 17.6 and 18.1 and 21.25. They fell to adultery, and filthy Sodomity, Chapter 19. Thus they forgot the Lords mercies, and therefore he severely punished them, as the story of the Judges shew, in giving them into the hands of their enemies, grievously to oppresse them; and heere by famine to plague them. From whence we may observe:

I. *That sins, especially these aforenamed, deserve the Judgements of God*, Deut. 28; 1 Kings 8.35-7, because sinnes provoke and incense the wrathfull indignation of the Lord against men, as appeareth by his terrible threatnings, Ps. 11.6; Rom. 2, and his inflicted punishments upon evill doers, of which there want not examples in the Scripture: as the old world, Sodom, Israelites [p. 7] in Wildernesse, in Canaan; and therefore to escape plagues, let us take heede of sinne, Ezek. 18.31; Rev. 18.

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<sup>11</sup> Bernard's emphasis that toleration of idolatry is a sin develops Topsell's analysis (3-4). Bernard is typical of Puritans in identifying Catholicism with idolatry. Consistently with this view, he objected to the introduction of 'popish' ceremonies into the Church of England.

In representing famine as a punishment for sin, Bernard follows the teaching of the earlier commentators Lavater (8r-8v) and Topsell (9).



II. *That famine and dearth is a punishment for sinne, and that a great plague,* Ezek. 5.16; Deut. 28.23-4; Lev. 26.19-20; Amos 4. Therefore to avoide it, either prevent sinne, that it bee not committed, or if we be overtaken, repent of sinne, and that sincerely, and speedily. And when this hand of God commeth upon us, let us search our waies, and let us humble our selves, 2 Chron. 7.14, that the Lord may heale our Land: for it is a terrible judgement, 1 Sam. 24.14,<sup>12</sup> and without mercy, 2 Kings 6.10, 29;<sup>13</sup> Ezek. 4.10.<sup>14</sup> This famine men do know: yet there is another Famine, which few know, or if they know it, they feare it not, the famine of the Word,<sup>15</sup> Amos 8.11, which the Lord threatneth by that Prophet, as a greater plague, than the famine of bread and water, the foode for the body: and yet alas, who feareth it? who are touched with the terrour of this plague?

III. *We may hereby see how God made his word good upon them, and that he dallyeth not with his people, in denouncing judgements against them:* for Moses had told them, Deut. 28, that God would thus afflict them, if they would bee rebellious against h[i]m: and heere the story telleth us, that in the daies of the Judges, this plague of famine came upon them. This *Ezechiel* verifieth in Chapter 6.10 and the punishments inflicted, as the Lord denounced them, shewe the truth hereof, that the Lord speaketh seriously; hee doth not jest with [p. 8] sinners; he will certainly make

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<sup>12</sup> The correct reference is 2 Sam. 24.14 where David has to choose between famine, military defeat and pestilence as punishment for sin.

<sup>13</sup> Verse 10 appears to be an error, as the account of the famine in Samaria is contained in verses 25-29. Verses 28-29 report cannibalism in famine. This is threatened in Deut. 28, cited by Bernard on pp. 6 and 7 (verses 53-7).

<sup>14</sup> This verse refers to the food God instructs Ezekiel to eat. The relevance to famine is indirect, and perhaps Bernard meant to cite verses 16-17, in which God explicitly announces the famine he will bring about in Jerusalem.

<sup>15</sup> This is probably an allusion to the scarcity of 'godly preachers' practising in England in the late 1620s owing to their oppression by the church authorities on account of their nonconformity. It is an expression used in Brook's *Lives of the Puritans* with reference to this period (Introduction 1:75). Bernard's concern illustrates the fundamental importance attached by Puritans to preaching, a view expressed at length in *The Faithfull Shepheard* and *The Shepherds Practice*.

good upon them what he threatneth, as may be seene upon *Jezabel*, *Ely's* sons, and upon his house, upon *Jeroboam*, *Joachin*, *Zedechiah*, and on Jerusalem. For the Lord is the God that hateth iniquity, and is just in his Word, even the God of Truth, as well in threats, as in promises: And therefore let us feare the Lyons roaring, and not be like him that blesseth himselfe, and dreadeth not the curse, Deut. 29.18,<sup>16</sup> but presumeth of mercy, as if God were not also just to punish offenders.<sup>17</sup> But such must know, they deceive themselves, they harden their own harts, they abuse Gods mercy, which is to worke feare, Ps. 130.4; Jer. 33.9, and obedience, Rom. 12.1. They spoyle God of his Justice and Truth in his threats, and incense the Lords wrath to plague them in a high degree, as he threatneth in Deuteronomie 29.19.<sup>18</sup>

*In the Land.*] In the Land of Canaan, the Kingdome of Israel, where God had placed them, planted them, and promised to them his blessings plentifully: yet see now, for their sinnes, in a Land once flowing with Milke and Honey, Ezek. 20.6, they finde scarcity. Hence note:

I. *That people deprive themselves, by their sinnes, of that which God had given, and they enjoyed, according to his promise.* For sinne will deprive Angels of heaven, *Adam* of Paradise, *Cain* of his honour, *Ruben* of his birth-right, thousands of the Land of Canaan, though they came out of Egypt: Jerusalem of her Kings, her Temple, Peace and prosperity; men of their honours, as [p. 9] *Jeroboam*, *Haman*; of their libertie, as *Manasses*; of health, as *Uzziah*; of their lives, as *Corah* with his company. Let us then blame our selves for our miseries, and not the Lord for

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<sup>16</sup> The correct reference is Deut.29.19.

<sup>17</sup> This is an example of a corrective use of doctrine according to Bernard's theory of preaching, 'which is when the lesson is used against corruption in maners, vice and wickednesse, whether it be for omission or commission' (Bernard, FS 67). It is evident that in the ensuing passage Bernard is addressing what the puritans would have regarded as the lax state of society in the early seventeenth century.

<sup>18</sup> The correct reference is probably Deut. 29.20.

punishing us, as wee deserve. And if we would hold the blessings which wee doe enjoy, beware of sinne, which will robbe us of all we have.

II. *That a fruitfull Land is made barraine for the sinnes of the inhabitants thereof*, Ps. 107; Lev. 26.19-20. And these sins in particular procure this plague; The abuse of Gods mercies, Luke 15.14;<sup>19</sup> Idolatrie, 1 Kings 17.1; 2 Kings 4.36;<sup>20</sup> The murthering of innocents, 2 Sam. 21.1; and the oppression of the poore, Amos 4.1, 6. Know then how to prevent hereby scarcity: and in the time of want, turne from sinne by repentance, and blame not the heavens, or earth: murmure not against unseasonable weather, but be displeased with our sinfull selves.

III. *Judgement begins at the house of the Lord*, 1 Pet. 4;<sup>21</sup> Ezek. 9,<sup>22</sup> hee will shew his hatred of sinne upon the land of the living: for he cannot suffer evill in his people; if a *Moses*, an *Aaron*, a *David*, a *Josias* sinne, they shall feelee the smart of it. Now therefore if judgement begin at Gods House, what shall become of Gods enemies? If the Church feelee wrath, what may the Adversaries expect?

*A certaine man of Bethlehem Judah.*] Judah the Royall Tribe: And this is added for distinction, because there was another Bethlehem in Zebulon, Josh. 19.15. This Bethlehem was called [p. 10] Ephrata, Gen. 35.13,<sup>23</sup> sixe miles from Jerusalem, as some say: here *Jacob* fed his sheepe, Gen. 31,<sup>24</sup> heere *Rachel* died, *David* was borne, and Jesus Christ our Lord; It had the name from Plenty, and signifieth the

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<sup>19</sup> The semicolons from here in the sentence replace the full stops following biblical reference numbers in the 1628 edition.

Here, Bernard refers to the punishment of the prodigal son rather than to his being generously forgiven, as the parable teaches.

<sup>20</sup> Although there are many references to idolatry in the Books of Kings, neither of these references is relevant to it.

<sup>21</sup> Specifically, verse 17. Bernard's subsequent question 'Now therefore if judgement begin at Gods House, what shall become of Gods enemies' derives from this verse. By 'Adversaries' in the next sentence Bernard would have meant the godless and perhaps Catholicism.

<sup>22</sup> Specifically verse 6.

<sup>23</sup> The correct reference is probably Gen. 35.19.

<sup>24</sup> The correct reference is Gen. 35.

*House of bread*; So as we see, the noble Tribe of Judah, and this honourable place of Bethlehem felt this scourge of God. *No place is exempt from the punishment, where sinne is suffered to reigne*: It bringeth famine upon Bethlehem Judah, and on the Land of Israel, it bringeth the sword and famine into Jerusalem. There is then no place to keepe us free from feeling the punishment, if sinne be not removed: chase out this, and call home againe the Lords blessings.

*Went to sojourne.*] As a stranger in another Countrey from his owne home. We here see, how *God can remove by one meanes or another, men out of the[i]r homes and harbour*. *David*, through just feare of *Absalom* out of Jerusalem; *Manasses* by force out of his Kingdome into prison: other by unthriftinesse cast out themselves: some voluntarily leave their habitation and place of abode, and returne not againe. All which came about by the hand of God, who hath all things at his disposing, that no man may thinke himselfe securely settled; especially if he be a *Shebnah*, the Lord will drive such out <Isa. 22.15-17>, Amos 4. 2-3. Note againe, how *feare of corporall wants will make men leave their home, their native soyle, their friends and kindred, to goe into a strange countrey*. So forcible is nature for preservation of bodily life, which man so much esteemeth and loveth. This should then [p. 11] make men care to keepe the blessings providently, and frugally, also to avoide the occasions and meanes of wastfull misspending, seeing feare of want will thus work. And if the love of corporall life be so forcible, how much more the love of eternall life, for which we should be willing to forsake all? But alas, the least worldly gaine, or carnall pleasure banisheth this love out of many mens hearts, who rather follow here *Elimelech*, to leave the people of God, to goe into Moab for the world, than *Abraham*, to forsake his Countrey, at the comandement of God.

*In the Country of Moab.*] This Moab was inhabited by those which came of *Lots* eldest sonne incestuously begotten <Gen. 19.37>; of this was *Balak* King, who hyred *Balaam* to curse Israel <Num. 22.6>, who committed fornication with the Daughters thereof,<sup>25</sup> to the destruction of thousands; over this Land reigned *Eglon*, who smote Israel, and possessed some part of the Land, and kept them in bondage eightene yeeres <Judg. 3.12-14>; some think that *Elimelech* journeyed to Moab in his dayes: howsoever, by this wee may learne, that *wicked Idolaters may have sometime plenty, when the people of God are in want*. Here Moab had plenty, when Israel was under a famine. Of the prosperity of the wicked, read Ps. 73.4 and 17.14 and 37.15;<sup>26</sup> Job 21.7, 13 and of the troubles of the godly, Heb. 11.37. And this commeth to passe, because the wicked are at home here; here their heaven and time of rejoycing: but the godly are not here at home, the Lord looketh for their comming to him, and therefore prepareth [p. 12] them by crosses, he loveth them, and therefore doth he correct them, that they might not be damned. Hence then it followeth, that we are not to judge mens spirituall estates by outward prosperity or adversitie; for the wicked have the greatest portion of the things of this life: See it in the parable of the Rich man and *Lazarus*. Why doe men then blesse themselves for their wealth and honour, and despise their poore brethren, in a farre better estate before God than they?

Question. *Whether did Elimelech well to goe from Bethlehem, into such an idolatrous country?*

Answer. It may seeme not, because he went of distrust, rather than of present want, verse 21, and for that he left the place of Gods true worship, and where the

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<sup>25</sup> See in Num. 25.1.

<sup>26</sup> The correct reference is 37.16.

Lord promised his blessing, Canaan also being a type of the Kingdome of heaven, to goe among the wicked Idolaters, whom the Lord by name also had forbidden to be received unto his people, Deut. 23.3; Neh. 13.1. Further, hereby he could not but endanger his family, to be defiled by idolatrie, if the Lord had not beene more mercifull. And to conclude this: We see how the Lords taking both him and his sonnes away, may somewhat perswade, that he did not wel, seeing the Lord suffered him not to returne home againe. True it is, that *David* went out of Judah, unto Idolaters, for feare of *Saul*, but it was against his will, and with much sorrow of heart. *Abraham*, he traveled into Egypt, but it was at Gods bidding: and the Shunamite might by the Prophets warrant goe into some place out of Israel, [p. 13] to prevent the misery of famine, 2 Kings 8.1-2. But what is this to such as have no such warrant, but such moving causes, as here?<sup>27</sup>

*Hee, and his wife, and his two sonnes.*] This is praise-worthy in him: For *an honest man careth for his wife and children, as well as for himselfe*. *Abraham* tooke his wife with him into Egypt, Gen. 12.18,<sup>28</sup> *Jacob* all his with him, Gen. 42,<sup>29</sup> for the wife is as himselfe, Gen. 2,<sup>30</sup> and so to be loved, Eph. 5,<sup>31</sup> and the children are bone of his bone. Reason and nature tyed *Elimelech* to this: an example of a loving husband and of a naturall parent to be imitated; and which condemneth those which runne away from wife and children, and are worse than Infidels, 1 Tim. 5.8, yea than the bruit beasts.<sup>32</sup> This man led them, they followed him: so wives and children are

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<sup>27</sup> Bernard's censure of Elimelech's leaving of his homeland expands on his earlier reference to this on p. 11, to assert that he left out of distrust rather than necessity. This could reflect the medieval Jewish commentators' criticism that Elimelech selfishly did not want to help his neighbours. This criticism is discussed by Lavater, see the Introduction section 4.2.1.

<sup>28</sup> The story is told in verses 11-20.

<sup>29</sup> The correct reference is Gen. 46.

<sup>30</sup> Specifically, verse 23.

<sup>31</sup> Specifically, verses 28, 33.

<sup>32</sup> Bernard evidently sees defective husbands as a current abuse needing correction. This is a theme in the early modern commentaries on *Ruth*. Bernard returns to it on pp. 52-3 and 281-2, and it occurs in

to be companions with their husbands and parents in adversitie. *Sarah* will follow *Abraham*, *Rachel* and *Lea Jacob* from their country and fathers house; and *Mary* the mother of Jesus will follow *Joseph*; for the husband is the head, and the bond of law bindeth them thereto: which checketh the contrarie; if husbands and parents doe command to be followed and obeyed in things lawfull. If *Elimelech*, as it may seeme, did not well to goe, it may be questioned whether these did well to follow him? He might doe amisse, and not they being under his government, so long as he led them not to doe evill, and to commit idolatrie, but for sustentation of life, and in that country where they were not outwardly compelled to idolatrie, but might serve God, as they had learned at home. [p. 14] If any thinke otherwise either of *Elimelechs* going, or of his company, I contend not.

Verse 2. *And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sonnes, Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem Judah: and they came into the countrey of Moab, and continued there.*

The Historiographer goeth on with the former narration of the journeying: first expressing by name the man, the wife and the sons, shewing plainly who they were: then the finishing of their journey: and thirdly, their abode there. Into these three things this verse divideth it selfe, the declaration of their persons what they were called, both in respect of their names, and place whence they came; the perfecting of their journey, and their stay there.

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Lavater (100v) and Topsell (13-15, 181-2). The commentators concern with defective husbands reflects contemporary controversy, notably the Swetnam debate (see the Introduction section 5).

*And the name of the man was Elimelech.*] By naming the parties, and not speaking in generall, as before, the holy Ghost would have notice taken of them, the better either to see their graces, or to discern their wants, and so to have a more certaine knowledge what to follow, or what to take heed of; for *the knowledge of persons maketh the things which they doe, either more or lesse apparent to us.* *Elimelech* signifieth *The Lord my King*: a man well descended, he was of the chiefest Tribe, to wit, of Judah, a nigh kinsman unto *Boaz* the Lord of Bethlehem, and one of note, as appeareth by the article in the Hebrew, and in the Greeke [p. 15] Septuagint also, as likewise by the notice taken of *Naomi* his wife at her returne, verse 19, yea he went out of Judah without want, as may be noted from verse 21 and as learned men from thence doe collect. And if so, his going away was more of feare to want, than present necessitie; which sheweth his great weakenesse, worthy reproofe. See here a man well borne, of good meanes, of good note, and carrying a name of trust in God, yet slipt through distrust of Gods providence, and too much relying upon his owne devised course, which yet failed him in the end.<sup>33</sup> *Great birth, good meanes, high name and fame save not from falling either into sinne, or outward misery, if a better blessing than all these be not given men from God:* and therefore not to rest upon them.

*And the name of his wife, Naomi.*] Whose daughter this was, the Scripture recordeth not: her name signifieth *My pleasantnesse, or sweetnesse*: as wives should be such to their husbands, and so husbands should account them. Shee was faire, a wise woman, of great note in the Citie, and a very godly and meeke-spirited woman, full of true love, patient in want, thankfull and humble: all which to be true, her

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<sup>33</sup> Bernard's reiteration of his condemnation of Elimelech (earlier expressed on pages 11 and 12-13 and later expressed on pages 16 and 17) illustrates his concern to show the workings of divine judgement in the story of Ruth.



words and deedes in this historie doe plainely shewe: So she was faire inward and outward; an example and Looking-glasse for women,<sup>34</sup> the gallant Dames,<sup>35</sup> which would be *Naomies* for outward beauty, and bravery; but are foule *Marahs* for want of grace and true goodnesse. *Naomi* is named before her children, both in the former, as a wife to *Elimelech*, [p. 16] and here as a Mother to them: and this reckoning of her name in this order, declareth her dignitie and place before them. Shee as a wife is to have place next *Elimelech* the husband, who is to preferre wife before children, for shee is himselfe; and as a mother to goe before them that be her children, who are to honour their parents.<sup>36</sup>

*And the name of his two sonnes.*] Why not her sonnes? for shee was not their mother in law, but they were sonnes borne of her body, verse 11. But they are called his, for the more honour: For the father chiefly giveth honour to the child.

*Mahlon, and Chilion.*] The former signifieth *infirmity*, the latter *finished*. Why so called, is not shewed, but they answer the event of things; the first, his fathers infirmity, in going from among Gods people, to live with Idolaters for preservation of his outward estate; and the other, his fathers death, being taken away in Moab, verse 3. He was *Mahlon* in his leaving of Bethlehem, and *Chilion* in abyding in Moab. And here note in all these names, how significant they be, which the Hebrewes did ever observe in naming their children, yea the Lord himselfe in giving a name to any one; as in calling *Abram*, *Abraham*, *Sarai*, *Sarah*: which is of us to be imitated, thereby expressing our faith and grace towards God, and admonishing them of some duety. True it is, that good names have no vertue in them

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<sup>34</sup> Bernard introduces Naomi as an exemplary woman with characteristics advocated in early modern conduct books. See the Introduction section 6.1.

<sup>35</sup> Fashionable women are suggested by 'gallant Dames'. Marah means bitter, and Naomi adopts this name when she returns to Bethlehem (see Ruth 1.20-1).

<sup>36</sup> The hierarchy of the household is indicated here. See the Introduction section 3.

to make men better, nor names without signification, to make any worse; yet for reverence to our holy profession, and that blessed Sacrament of [p. 17] Baptisme, at which time names be given, and in imitation of the godly in Scripture, yea of God himselfe, who called his first Sonne of men, *Adam*, and his blessed holy One, *Jesus*, by the Message of an Angel; let us give our children good names, significant, and comely, not absurd, ridiculous and impious, as some have done, out of the spirit of prophanenesse.<sup>37</sup>

*Ephrathites of Bethlehem Judah.*] So termed, because Bethlehem was called Ephrata, Gen. 35.19, or for that the Countrey where Bethlehem stood, was so called, as may appeare in Mic. 5.2 and Judah is added not onely for a distinction of this Bethlehem, from the other in Zabulon, but for to make a difference of the Ephrathites here, from other in the tribe of *Ephraim*; for *Jeroboam* is called an Ephrathite, 1 Kings 11.26. By which wee see how carefull the holy Ghost is to make cleare the History, and to free it from ambiguity of speech that the truth might better appeare, and not be mistaken.<sup>38</sup> *The Penmen of this and other divine Histories are Faithfull Historians*: and such should others be, and not full of fables, falshood and deceit, written through feare, or favour, or ill will.

*And they came into the Countrey of Moab.*] So they finished their journey. Howsoever the Man might doe amisse in leaving Israel for Moab, the Land of the living, for a dead Nation; yet it pleased the Lord to speede his journey, to bring to passe, what he had intended for the conversion of *Ruth*, to make her a mother in

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<sup>37</sup> In advising the judicious naming of children, Bernard is following a preoccupation the earlier *Ruth* commentators, Lavater (153v-155v) and Topsell (80-1, 293). Bernard returns to this subject on p. 466-8.

<sup>38</sup> In drawing attention at this early stage to the holy Ghost's direction of the narration of the story, Bernard indicates to his readers that the events in *Ruth* which he will now expound are explicitly and authentically expressed and cannot be questioned, even when they are perplexing.

Israel: whence [p. 18] we see, *that God intending good to some, in his secret counsel, may prosper that, which others undertake, with no good warrant.* Thus shall *Nebuchadnezzar* prosper against Jerusalem; *Jacobs* sonnes act, in selling *Joseph* their brother; yea the enemies of Christ to put him to death, as God had determined, Acts 4. For the Lord can worke good out of evill, and can use ill instruments to good purposes: And therefore simply for the good issue, which God maketh, we are not to approve of either the matter in hand, or the mindes of men, which God useth therein, as is apparent in the former examples: for Gods will and worke was one thing, but theirs another: hee is to be praised, but they are to be reprov'd.<sup>39</sup> The word *Coutrey*, may be also translated, the *field*, as in the Originall<sup>40</sup> it is often used <sadeh, Gen. 2.5; Num. 20.17; Prov. 24.3,<sup>41</sup> Septuagint, eis agron<sup>42</sup>>; and hence some conjecture that *Elimelech* went not into the Cities of the Moabites, but dwelt in Tents, as did *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, and not in the Cities of the Canaanites.<sup>43</sup> *If men live where Idolaters be, it is good to avoid the occasion of infection as much as may be.* For much conversing breedeth familiarity: this, love of their persons, and so a liking of their waies, with neglect of true Religion at the first, but it falleth into contempt at last. It is rare to bee a righteous hearted *Lot* in Sodom, he was but one, and one alone; Israelites became Idolaters in Egypt.<sup>44</sup> This is it which made the Lord

<sup>39</sup> This extended discussion of God's providence shows how important it is to Bernard's interpretation of the story, in which it is a recurring theme. See the Introduction section 3.

<sup>40</sup> '[T]he Originall' refers to the Hebrew text, believed to be dictated by God Himself.

<sup>41</sup> This correct reference is probably Prov. 25.25.

<sup>42</sup> David Mealand (Edinburgh University), who assisted with the presentation of the Greek in this edition, made the following observation about the Greek in the commentary of 1628. Firstly, it appears that the compositor had difficulty in deciphering Bernard's Greek script. Secondly, it may be that he did not have a full set of Greek letters and had to improvise.

<sup>43</sup> Bernard is evidently anxious about the irreligious ethos of cities. As a village pastor he could catechize everyone, keeping them on the right path. The importance he attached to this task is indicated by the large number of catechetical works which he published (See the Introduction section 2).

<sup>44</sup> The Israelites did not become Idolaters in Egypt. They were an ethnic minority, distinct and persecuted. In representing the early Israelites as idolaters, Bernard may be reflecting the element of

forbid communion and marriages to them, with the Canaanites, lest they should learne their wayes.<sup>45</sup> Let us therefore take heede of conversing with [p. 19] the wicked, and with idolatrous people: It is good that idle Travellers should consider well hereof.<sup>46</sup>

*And continued there.]* So then they had no repulse, but were allowed to dwell there, and that for a long time, as the words in verse 4 doe shew: yet these Moabites were formerly hard-hearted enough, Deut. 23.3,<sup>47</sup> but by this we see, *that none are so churlish and unkinde at one time to some, but God can incline their hearts at another time to other some.* The History of Heathen Emperours manifesteth the truth of this towards Christians; and the Story of the Israelites, comming forth of Egypt: for mens hearts, yea the hearts of Kings, are in the Lords hands, to turne them towards whom he pleaseth, as *Nehemiah* knew well, which made him to pray <Neh. 1>: and *Jacob* also, when he feared the comming of *Esau*.<sup>48</sup> When wee have to doe with ill and dogged natured men, let us goe to God, who can turne *Esaus* bloody heart, in his comming foorth, into a kind welcomming of his brother at their meeting,<sup>49</sup> he can incline *Assuerus* heart towards *Ester*, to make him hold out to her the golden Scepter.<sup>50</sup> Consider the promise, Jer. 15.11 and 42.12, and let us seeke to please God, and hee will worke us favour in the eyes of men, Prov. 16.7 and Job 5.23, let this be our comfort. It may further seeme by the course of this Story, that these

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hostility in the attitudes of early modern Christians to Jews. Although Bernard draws on the Jewish interpreters on the Book of Leviticus on p. 359, ambivalence and hostility towards Jews is well illustrated by the early modern commentators on the Book of Ruth (*Lavater* eg. p. 7v-8r, *Topsell* 126).

<sup>45</sup> In Deut. 29 Moses sets out the terms of the Covenant with God, in which the Israelites are forbidden to worship the gods of other nations.

<sup>46</sup> Travellers to the continent could pick up tolerance of Roman Catholicism. Bernard refers to husbands without a calling who, from levity, become travellers in other countries on p. 416.

<sup>47</sup> The correct reference is Deut. 23.4.

<sup>48</sup> Jacob's prayer is set out in Gen. 32.9-12.

<sup>49</sup> Esau's welcoming of Jacob is related in Gen. 33.4.

<sup>50</sup> See Esth. 5.2.

Bethlehemites were not onely suffered to dwell among the Moabites, but also that they were kindly used, in that they would be content to marry with them, which is a commendation to [p. 20] them, that would thus welcome such, as came among them for succour. *It is a matter praise-worthy to be harbersome to strangers*; for this were the Barbarians commended, Acts 28.2, 7, 10, who received the Apostle and the rest into their houses, made them fires because of the cold and raine in Winter, courteously lodged them, and when they departed, being such as had suffered shipwracke, and were thereby in want, those Barbarians helped them with necessities. This was humanity and mercy; For this, *Abraham*, and *Lot*, and *Job* are commended; and this goodnesse wee must learne to practise, for so are wee exhorted, Heb. 13.2, and these former examples lead us to it. This dutie is to be done, not onely to our kindred, to our friends, to our knowne countrey men, but to strangers, Heb. 13.2, yea and to our enemies in their neede, 2 Kings 6.23; Rom. 12.20.

Verse 3. *And Elimelech Naomies husband dyed, and shee was left, and her two sonnes.*

This telleth us of the heaue crosse which befell *Naomi*, which was in the death of her husband, and that, as it may seeme, very shortly after they were come into Moab, before the sonnes did marry: so she was left a widdow, with two fatherlesse children, to take care for them in a strange countrey.<sup>51</sup> This verse is a narration of an

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<sup>51</sup> Bernard notes Naomi's change in status to widowhood, widows being the subject of much comment, for example, in the conduct literature, in his own time. By referring to her sons as fatherless children, he conjures up the predicament of widows left without support. Richard Brathwait addresses this issue in *The English Gentlewoman* (London, 1631) p. 112-3. Recent discussion of the early modern widow occurs in the following articles: Olwen Hufton, 'Widowhood'; Kathleen M. Llewellyn, 'Words to the Wise'; Barbara J. Todd, 'The Virtuous Widow'.

event, what it was, and upon whom it fell, to the great heavinesse of *Naomi*: the event was [p. 21] death, and here is shewed whom it tooke, and whom it left.

*And Elimelech dyed.*] His age is not reckoned, he could not bee very old, if wee may gesse his yeeres by his sonnes marrying so young women after his death, yet he dyeth, yea and there also, whither he went for food to preserve life: He went first from Israel, the Land of the living, and led them thence, and so he now goeth out of the world before them; from whence note:

I. *That death is the end of all, and it spareth none*, Josh. 23.14; Job 21.33; Eccles. 7.2 and 6.6; 1 Cor. 15.51; Heb. 9.27, for all have sinned, Rom. 5, and death is the reward of sinne, Rom. 6. And therefore let all prepare to die.<sup>52</sup>

II. *That a full supplie of bodily wants cannot prevent death*: The man must die in Moab, where was food enough: the rich Glutton must die also, and the Rich man with his barne full.<sup>53</sup> for the sentence of death is irrevocable, and mans life dependeth not upon the outward meanes of life, for then the rich and mighty would never die.

Let not men in their abundance thinke to escape death: let them therefore not set their hearts on their wealth, for they must leave it. It is follie to trust in riches, for they cannot deliver from death, either ordinary, or extraordinary, lingering, or suddaine, naturall, or violent, as examples and experience it selfe teacheth.

III. *That where men think to preserve life, there they may may lose it*, as *Elimelech* doth here, fleeing from the [p. 22] famine in Israel, yet dyed where plenty was, in Moab: for no place is free from death, and when the appointed time is come,

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<sup>52</sup> Preparation for death was very important for the devout in early modern England, as is evidenced by the many biographies and lives that were written in the period (see Clark, Stubs). This use of the first doctrine Bernard draws from *Elimelech* dying, and the uses of the following two doctrines treat this subject.

<sup>53</sup> See Luke 12.16-21.

man cannot passe it, Job 14.5. We<sup>54</sup> cannot thinke therefore our selves safe any where from death, nay, many times, where we may think our selves secure, there death may take us away.

*Naomies husband.*] It is not said her husband, which might well have beene spoken, by way of relation to her, without her name, because shee was named before, and no other woman; but this woman was a very vertuous woman,<sup>55</sup> and this was a great crosse to her, and therefore, both to expresse her excellency, and her begun misery, it is said, *Naomies husband* dyed, the husband of so rare a wife died. Note hence,

I. *That it is a grace for some, to be called the husbands of some women*; their name is a grace to them, if they be vertuous: for such a one is a crowne to her husband, Prov. 12.4. Now, a crowne is high glory to a man: and *her husband* is knowne in the gates, Prov. 31.23. Such wives are to bee made much of, as rare Birdes;<sup>56</sup> for too many may sit downe with shame, and blush to bee named the husbands of some wives: Foolish, though faire: faire, but perhaps filthy: rich, but withal retchlesse: wives, but without gouvernement, husbands named the head, but they must bee masters: sometime painefull, but Peacok-like proud; often more mad, or sullen sad, than merrie; if merrie, it keepes not in with modesty;<sup>57</sup> if she speake, it is lowd, often heard farther, then seene, and yet ofte- [p. 23] ner seene by a quiet

<sup>54</sup> In the present edition a capital letter replaces the lower case 'w' in the 1628 edition.

<sup>55</sup> Bernard again emphasises Naomi's virtue, so making her later behaviour, which he feels compelled to criticise, exceptional.

<sup>56</sup> A vague reference to the 'rara avis' in Juvenal's sixth satire, line 165.

<sup>57</sup> Bernard's attack on 'some wives' is characteristic of the formal controversy about women, as opposed to the conduct book ethos which he has previously invoked, and at this point shows a resemblance to the balancing formula. This formula is described by Linda Woodbridge in Women and the English Renaissance as presenting contrary sorts of women as equally faulty (67). Woodbridge's overall discussion of the formal controversy about women is considered in the Introduction section 5.

husband, then well liked of. In a word, a wicked foolish woman, is shame to his person, and rottennesse to his bones, Prov. 12.4.

II. *That grace in one, prevents not death in another*; Naomies husband must die, so Abrahams wife also: *Jacob* must bid his *Rachel* adieu, and *Ezechiel* the desire of eyes <Ezek. 24.16>: for no mans grace can free himselfe, much lesse another from death: Ps. 49.7, 9, and married persons are not appointed the same length of daies; No, we come not together, and wee goe not together. Let none hope for life by the grace of another; let the neerest, and dearest looke to part by death; *Ruth* loved *Naomi* most dearly, and saith, that nothing should separate them, but onely death, verse 17, because shee knew, that that must needes be yelded unto.

III. *That it is a great crosse for a woman to lose a good husband*. This is implied, as I said, in naming her by name; for in him the wife loseth her head, her guide, her stay, and comfort, if hee be a vertuous man, and a good husband. I neede not intreat good and loving wives to mourne for such; sure enough they have cause: and wives cannot but mourne, except they conceit a new comfort very quickly, as some doe, for feare the old griefe should lye too long at the heart for him that is dead, and cannot be recalled; so with them, the living is better to be liked of, than the dead: for they know their husbands would, perhaps, have so dealt with them.<sup>58</sup>

*And shee was left and her two sonnes.*] Death sea- [p. 24] zed onely upon *Elimelech*, and left *Naomi*, and also her sonnes, that she might not be utterly comfortlesse in a strange countrey. From this may we note these two things:

I. *That albeit death is due to all* (in as much as all have sinned) *yet it seizeth not upon all at once*; but one dyeth now, and another hereafter, as we see in all ages,

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<sup>58</sup> Here, Bernard expresses a qualified approval of remarriage, as he again does on p. 66, where he cites St. Paul's views in 1 Cor. 7 (where verses 8-9 and 39-40 are relevant) and 1 Tim. 5 (where verses 11 and 14 are relevant).



which commeth not to passe for any good in one, more than in another; but God will have mankind upon earth till the last day; hee forbearerth some, and repriveth them for their amendment; for the lengthning of life, is for our further repentance, if wee bee the Lords, or for the greater condemnation of such, as shall perish.<sup>59</sup> For this mercy God is to bee praised, for we deserve death, and it might seaze upon every one at once, and take us away, because wee are borne in sinne, brought up therein, and none so free ever, but in his highest pitch of well-doing, he may be tainted of sinne, 1 John 1.

II. *That the Lord in afflicting his children, sweeteneth the same with some comforts:* he wholly leaveth not them without some taste of his mercy and goodnesse, as we may see in his dealing with *Naomi*: he tooke away her husband, and left two sonnes; and after tooke them away, but gave her an excellent daughter in Law. *Elisha* had an earthly power comming against him, but he then saw a great help from heaven <2 Kings 6.10<sup>60</sup>>. It was a bitter affliction for *Joseph* to be sold of his brethren, but it was sweetened with *Potiphars* favour; This at length imprisoned him unjust[l]y, but the Lord [p. 25] gave him favour in the eyes of the Keeper of the Prison, to sugar this bitter pill with.<sup>61</sup> And this the Lord doth in mercy, that his children might not be overwhelmed with grieve, and swallowed up of sorrow: therefore by one meanes he casts them downe, but by another sustaineth them. Let not therefore men, which feare God, bee over-sad when afflictions come; God will lay no more then they can beare: he layeth on them a burthen, but he putteth under his hand. If wee looke upon the affliction, let us also consider, what cause of

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<sup>59</sup> Here Bernard engages with the theological issue of predestination. See the Introduction section 3.

<sup>60</sup> The correct reference is 2 Kings 6.17.

<sup>61</sup> See Gen. 39.

comfort wee have; marke when, for what, how long or short, what it is allayed with, that we bee not wholly cast downe.

Verse 4. *And they tooke them wives of the women of Moab, the name of the one was Orpha,<sup>62</sup> and the name of the other Ruth, and they dwelled there about tenne yeeres.*

This sheweth what course the sonnes tooke after their fathers death, they returned not home: this crosse brought them not to thinke of leaving that idolatrous Countrey, but they settled themselves to marry there; so as this verse telleth us of two things; the first is, of a marriage, and herein who they were, the men, *Elimelechs* sonnes, the women, who are set out by their Countrey, then by their names: the second is, of their abode in Moab, and time how long.

Note (before I come to the words) that *every crosse bringeth not men home againe*: their fathers [p. 26] death made them not resolve to goe backe unto Gods people againe:<sup>63</sup> *Lot* was taken prisoner, yet would he still abide in Sodom, after his deliverance.<sup>64</sup> *Jehosaphats* danger with *Achab*, made him not wholly to forsake that house, but he must have more afflictions, and the Prophet openly to rebuke him.<sup>65</sup> And this commeth for want of waighing the true cause of afflictions, when they

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<sup>62</sup> The early modern commentators on *Ruth* vary in their spelling of this name, rendered 'Orpah' in recent Bibles. The Lavater translation has 'Orpah', Topsell has 'Orpah' (32) and 'Horpah' (eg. 52), and Bernard has 'Orpha'. In the thesis discussion, 'Orpah' is used since it is most familiar to the modern reader.

<sup>63</sup> Bernard blames Mahlon and Chilion for not being stimulated by their father's death to return to their homeland, as the explanations for not responding to affliction later in the passage emphasise. In doing so, he transfers his often repeated censure of Elimelech to them, now the male heads of the family in whom he would have maintained that authority lay. His argument is validated, in his view, by the untimely deaths of Elimelech and, later in the narrative, his sons. The punitive character of God is again central in Bernard's analysis.

<sup>64</sup> See Gen. 14.

<sup>65</sup> See 1 Kings 22 and 2 Kings 3.

happen, or desire to please other, or the love of this world, or some such corruption of our heart. To bewaile this our perverse nature not easily reformed, a great affliction must worke on *Manasses*,<sup>66</sup> great distresse must presse the prodigall sonne, before they will come to themselves, and turne to the Lord, yea some are worse for afflictions, as may be seene in *Achaz*, 2 Chron. 28.22, in *Amon*, Chapter 33.23, in the Antichristians, Rev. 16.11, and in the Jewes, Jer. 5.3.

*And they tooke them.*] This may seeme an act of their owne, as that of *Lamech*, Gen. 4.19, and that of the sonnes of God, 6.2, and not their mothers deed, as is said of *Hagar*, Gen. 21.21. If they did this with her consent, it was as *godly children should doe, to marry with consent of parents*: For parents have authoritie in this case,<sup>67</sup> 1 Cor. 7;<sup>68</sup> children owe this honour to them. Examples of the godly, as in *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, and *Samson*, move to it: and the contrary is found fault with, Gen. 6.2, and in *Esau*,<sup>69</sup> our lawes require it, godly men and learned Divines so teach out of the Word. Let children therefore herein take advice of their parents; they shall thrive the better: if they doe [p. 27] well, their parents will rejoyce: if otherwise, then children may more boldly seeke to parents for comfort, and expect helpe at their hands.

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<sup>66</sup> See 2 Chron. 33.

<sup>67</sup> Bernard reminds his readers that parental authority over sons could be exercised by mothers if they were widowed. He explains what he perceives to be the main need for parental direction in the choice of marriage partner in his exposition of the lemma '*Shall I not seeke?*' chapter 3 verse 1 (244). See also pp. 28-9, 53, 133. Contemporary casuists were agreed on the importance of parental consent. See e.g. Joseph Hall, *Cases of Conscience Practically Resolved* (1654) 285-95. Lady Anne Halkett's view is probably representative of the attitude of the children. 'For though my duty did oblige mee nott to marry any withoutt my Mothers consent, yet itt would nott tye mee to Marry without my owne.' (Halkett 59). The consensus on parental direction, then, was not inconsistent with an element of choice by the future spouses. See also the discussion in connection with Lawrence Stone *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* in the Introduction section 5.

<sup>68</sup> A semicolon has been inserted here to replace the full stop after the biblical reference. This reference appears to be erroneous.

<sup>69</sup> See Gen. 26.34-35.

*Wives.*] So women be called, when they be married unto men, or betrothed. It is as if it had beene said, They tooke yong women for wives to live in Gods ordinance, and not for wantons, to live in uncleannesse. Though they were not in Israel, yet they let not loose the unbrideled lust of nature, but used marriage the ordinance of God.<sup>70</sup> So men are to take women as wives, to live together in Gods holy ordinance; as the godly have ever made conscience<sup>71</sup> to doe; and not to live as brute beasts, to defile themselves; as *Hamor*<sup>72</sup> did *Dinah*, and *Zimri* did *Cozbi*,<sup>73</sup> in the sinne of fornication. From this must we flie, as the Apostle exhorteth, and from other degrees of uncleannesse, as adulterie which God severly punished, 2 Sam. 22.10;<sup>74</sup> Job 31.9, 11, so incest, Gen. 19.36; 1 Cor. 5.1; 2 Sam. 13.14, and other unnaturall pollutions not to be named, Rom. 1, which God giveth reprobate mindes over unto.

*Of the women of Moab.*] With these they were not to marry, Deut. 7.3 and 23.3; Ezra 9.1, 2; Neh. 13.23, 25-6.<sup>75</sup> *Young persons in their choyce soone erre, if they suffer lust to rule, and follow not the Law of God*, Gen. 6.2. Herein wise *Salomon* was overtaken, Neh. 13.26; 1 Kings 11.1. Therefore men are to bridle appetite and lust; and let the Lord rule them, Religion and reason guide them herein. The children of God are not to marry with the daughters of men: it is condemned, Gen. 6.2, the contrary commanded, Deut. 7.3-4. See there the reason, and

<sup>70</sup> Bernard balances his condemnation of Mahlon and Chilion for not returning to their homeland and the consequences involved in this with a recognition of their virtue in entering the state of matrimony.

<sup>71</sup> 'to make (a) conscience': 'to make it a matter of conscience, to have scruples about, to scruple' (OEDO).

<sup>72</sup> Presumably, Hamor's son, Shechem is meant. See Gen. 34.

<sup>73</sup> See Num. 25.

<sup>74</sup> The correct reference is probably 2 Sam. 12.10.

<sup>75</sup> The series of biblical references here shows Bernard's recognition that the marriages of Mahlon and Chilion, which pass uncriticised in *Ruth*, appear to be contrary to repeated injunctions elsewhere in the Bible. Bernard's treatment of these marriages, and the strain they entail for his theoretical position that the Bible is consistent, are discussed in the Introduction section 4.2.2. See also section 7 of the Introduction.

equity therof ever, such marriages are not made in the Lord, as they ought, 1 Cor. 7.36, and God hath punished such matches: see in *Salomon*, 1 Kings 11, and in *Jehosaphat*, in marrying his sonne to *Athaliah*, 2 Chron. 21.6.<sup>76</sup> If *Rahab* bee a beleever, *Salomon*<sup>77</sup> may take her to wife, and so *Boaz* may marry *Ruth*: and if there were none other to match with in the world, *Abraham* may take one out of another countrey for *Isaac*; and *Jacob* may marry *Labans* daughter: but there is no such want, but that the sonnes of *Abraham* may match with the daughters of *Abraham* now.<sup>78</sup>

*The name of the one was Orpha, and the name of the other Ruth.*] This was the wife of *Mahlon*, Chapter 4.10, the elder brother, and *Orpha* the wife of *Chilion* the younger: whether sisters or no, or of what parents these came, is not mentioned.<sup>79</sup> These Heathen people refused not in those daies to match with strangers; *Jethro* giveth his daughter to *Moses*, which must be for his vertue, and not for his wealth; for hee had none, hee was brought up like a Prince, but he humbled himselfe to keepe Sheepe, and so obtained his wife. *Mens manhood, vertues, and painefulnesse in those dayes got them wives.* *Caleb* will marry his daughter for the mans vertue sake, and valorous spirit;<sup>80</sup> *Saul* will pretend as much towards *David*, but that was pretended in policy, not in truth; *Laban* the worldling will marry his daughters for the

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<sup>76</sup> Presumably the defect in terms of ethnicity of *Athaliah* (whose identity as the granddaughter of Ahab's father Omri and also as the mother of the son of Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat, is established in 2 Kings 8.25-6) was that she was the daughter of Ahab who was married to Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians (1 Kings 16.31). Possibly Bernard's reference, although it identifies Jehoram's wife as the daughter of Ahab, is not accurate in that it does not state God's punishment of the match. This punishment, according to Bernard's later mention of the episode on p. 402, is that of Jehoram, set out in 2 Chron. 21.13[-19] rather than of Jehoshaphat.

<sup>77</sup> 'Salomon' is a misprint for 'Salmon', who is cited in the genealogy in Matt. 1.

<sup>78</sup> Bernard refers to his own society, in which the godly have no excuse for not marrying other godly individuals.

<sup>79</sup> Bernard does not even mention the claim of Jewish commentators, related and dismissed by Lavater, that Ruth was the daughter of Eglon, the king of Moab stabbed by Ehud. (*Lavater* 16r). Bernard shows his concern to draw on what is actually said in the Bible.

<sup>80</sup> See Judg. 1.12-13. Bernard presses the story of a warrior being rewarded for a conquest into an argument for rewarding virtue.

world, and sell them for gaine: but a godly man [p. 29] preferreth grace before goods, and wisdom before the world; though where grace is, if goods may come with it, it is a blessing, and the better to be liked of, for helpe to uphold the burthen of marriage.

*And they dwelt there about tenne yeeres.] Whether this time beginneth at their first comming, or after this marriage, is not certaine, but it is ten yeeres before Naomi heares of the Lords visiting of Israel with plenty. It is a long time for a godly woman to bee kept from Gods people, and publike service of his name.<sup>81</sup> David lamented it much, Ps. 120.5, and desired the presence of God and his Tabernacle, Ps. 84.1, 4. In Moab was corporall plenty, but not spirituall; for the one, the other was neglected. Such is our corruption; a comon sinne now, I wish it had not taken possession of the best.<sup>82</sup> But besides this, we may further note, how a heavy calamity may long rest upon Gods people: we may reade of a famine, three yeres and a halfe in Achabs daies: three yeeres in Davids time, 2 Sam. 21.1; 1 Kings 17.1; Luke 4.25, and seven yeeres at another time, 2 Kings 1,<sup>83</sup> and here also, for a great many of yeeres. And this commeth through mens obstinacie in sinne, and for that such things are not reformed, as God commandeth, or for that some evils are not punished, as they ought to bee; as for innocent blood-shed, 1 Sam. 21.1,<sup>84</sup> for open idolatrie, and murthering of the Saints, as in Achabs dayes. We are in such continuing judgements, to looke to our waies, and bewaile our sinnes: also seeing thus [p. 30] Gods hand against his people so long, wee may learne patience in the yeres of scarcity, and blesse God that*

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<sup>81</sup> Bernard was probably struck by the length of Naomi's absence from the godly because in seventeenth-century England everyone had to attend the parish church every Sunday or face legal penalties.

<sup>82</sup> Although a very generalised statement, this indicates Bernard's sense of alienation from the society of his time.

<sup>83</sup> The correct reference is 2 Kings 8.1.

<sup>84</sup> The correct reference is 2 Samuel 21.1.

never thus afflicted us in any of our remembrances; for such a famine would in these Northerne parts be most intolerable, farre more unsufferable, than in hot countreyes, where people could humble themselves with fasting, many dayes together.<sup>85</sup>

Verse 5. *And Mahlon and Chilion dyed also both of them, and the woman was left of her two sonnes, and of her husband.*

This verse sheweth a further grieve which befell good *Naomi*, which was the death of both her sonnes, and so to be left a heavie soule in solitarinesse in a strange countrey, where she could have no spirituall comfort, and where now she had lost her chieftest corporall comfort.

*And Mahlon and Chilion dyed also both of them.*] These enjoyed their yong wives for some space, and had time to have returned home to the Lords people, but they for bodily maintenance, and new friends gotten by their marriages, would not; the Lord therefore tooke them away in this strange Land. Many things may be noted.

I. That the Lord gave them time to marry, and to enjoy their marriage for some space, though they made no better use of their fathers death: thus *good and patient is God unto men*, for their bettering, if it would be, for which praise him.

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<sup>85</sup> Bernard here, as on p. 423, draws attention to the more settled harvests of his time. This is by contrast with the circumstances of famine in which Topsell wrote his commentary in 1596, indicated by the claim on the title page that this commentary is profitable for 'this present time of dearth' (Topsell title page). This earlier famine, in particular, may have occasioned Bernard's observation that famine in northern parts would be worse than famine in hot countries. Lavater also alludes to scarcity of corn in his society (109v). These earlier commentators' connection with famine is discussed in the Introduction section 4.2.1. It is possible that they were drawn to *Ruth* because it concerns famine and offers ways of addressing food shortage. For Bernard, however, famine, being a judgement of God punishing sin, is particularly instructive in illustrating the punishment of the sin which he perceives in his own society. The story will also be seen to give him the opportunity to express his views on charity.

[p. 31] II. That *when God hath proved men in patience, and they will not make right use thereof; then will he take them away*; for he will not alwaies strive in mercie: here the abusers of Gods goodnesse may learne to take heed.

III. That *God can and will cut off sometime yong men in the flowre of their youth*. Thus he tooke away *Nadab and Abihu*,<sup>86</sup> *Hophni and Phinees*,<sup>87</sup> *Amnon and Absalom*,<sup>88</sup> two gallant yong Princes: so here these two, though some by violent death, and other by naturall death. And this is sometime a punishment for sinne, Ps. 55.23; 1 Sam. 2.31, but not ever: for God in mercie will take some from the evils of the world, as he did *Josias*.<sup>89</sup> Let none because of youth put farre off the day of death. Death respecteth no age, no strength, no beauty: Remember thy Creatour in the dayes of thy youth, Eccles. 12.1. Thy owne sinne may cut thee off in youth, as it did *Absalom*, and so the rest: or thy fathers sinne, as  *Davids* child was taken away, 2 Sam. 12.14, and the tenne Tribes from *Rehoboam*, and the sonnes of *Saul* <1 Kings 11.12 and 21.6<sup>90</sup>>.

*And the woman was left of her two sons, and her husband.*] This is added, to aggravate the affliction of *Naomi*; and doth teach, that *neither few nor light afflictions sometime befall the godly*. *Naomi* lost her husband, then not one, but both her sonnes, and<sup>91</sup> left their widowes without children, so as *Naomi* had none of his

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<sup>86</sup> See Num. 3.4.

<sup>87</sup> Hophni and Phinehas, sons of Eli, see 1 Sam. 2.34.

<sup>88</sup> See 2 Sam. 13 and 2 Sam. 18.

<sup>89</sup> Josias died in battle, see 2 Chron. 35. The allusion to the evils of the world may refer to Jeremiah's lament for the sins of Israel, Jer. 3.6 and the following verses.

<sup>90</sup> The first reference, 1 Kings 11.12, refers God's vow to punish Solomon's son for Solomon's sin by taking the ten tribes away from him. The story of the loss to Rehoboam, Solomon's son, of the ten tribes after he followed the advice of foolish young men is told in 1 Kings 12.

The second biblical reference, 21.6 appears to be erroneous. The death of Saul's sons in battle is related in 1 Sam. 31.2, and Samuel speaks of the fate of Saul and his sons in the battle on account of Saul's disobedience to God in 1 Sam. 28.18-19.

<sup>91</sup> Perhaps there is a misprint here – it would fit the sense better to say 'who left their widowes' rather than 'and left their widowes'.



bloud<sup>92</sup> remaining in Moab. And as shee was thus afflicted, so was *David*, who had proud and scornefull brethren, a bloudily-minded father in law, a mocking *Michal* to his wife, [p. 32] lewd and unnaturall children; besides many other great trialls.<sup>93</sup> What shall I speake of *Jobs* trialls, *Jeremies* troubles, and *Pauls* persecutions?<sup>94</sup> Yet God thus suffers his to be tried, to make them know themselves, to shew them their graces, and their imperfections, which in affliction they will manifest; to weane them from the world, to the love of a better life, to whip them from their sinnes, and to make our vile natures tame, to submit to his yoke.<sup>95</sup> Let us looke therefore for them, let us be contented and patient under them, and consider the troubles of others of old, and in the primitive Church, and of later times. Let us not thinke our condition the worse before God, but rather the better, if instruction be with correction; for God loveth us then. It is a fault to murmur at him, it is an error to thinke our estate to be evill before God, because of sundry and great crosses; for many are the afflictions of the righteous:<sup>96</sup> he saith not, of the wicked, yet then righteous, when they be afflicted: this is comfort against despaire.

Note againe, that he saith, *the woman* was left: he saith not now, *Naomi*, as before and after, to expresse her dejected condition; for *a widow, poore, alone, without friends, and in a strange*<sup>97</sup> *country, is in an afflicted estate, and*

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<sup>92</sup> That is, Elimelech's relations.

<sup>93</sup> David's eldest brother, Eliab, spoke scornfully to him in 1 Sam. 17.28. His father-in-law was Saul. Michal mocks David in 2 Sam. 6.20.

<sup>94</sup> Job, Jeremiah and Paul had many trials.

<sup>95</sup> Having earlier drawn attention to God's punishments, Bernard here declares God's purposes respecting the afflictions of the godly. This would have been particularly relevant to the suffering Puritan clergymen of Bernard's time, and the instructive use which follows might have been written with them in mind. In this use, he enjoins contentment and patience and asserts that it is a fault to murmur at God. Such composure in affliction may have been expected of clergy in particular; regarding the afflicted in general, Topsell in his commentary on *Ruth* allows that 'wee may feare and cry under the burthen of our paines, that our afflictions are bitter unto us; and that the hand of the Lord is grievous uppon us.' (82)

<sup>96</sup> Bernard refers to Ps. 34.19, 'Many *are* the afflictions of the righteous [. . .]'.

<sup>97</sup> 'strange': 'Of a country or other geographical feature: Situated outside one's own land.' (*OEDO*).

*contemptible*: it is the[n], not *Naomi*, but the woman in distresse and miserie.<sup>98</sup> And lastly observe, that *when death calleth, friends must part, and one leave another*, husbands their wives, children their parents, and parents their children; as here, no band of love can keepe them then to- [p. 33] gether, death must be welcome, and unto dearest friends we must bid farewell.<sup>99</sup>

Verse 6. *Then she arose with her daughters in law, that shee might returne from the Countrey of Moab: for shee had heard in the Countrey of Moab, how that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread.*

Here is at the length the returne of *Naomi*, with whom, from whence, and the reason drawing her minde homeward.

*Then shee arose.*] Shee had long abode in Moab: now after such crosses, shee ariseth to goe thence, unto the Church<sup>100</sup> and people of God: when the Lord thus afflicted her, when shee saw her selfe destitute of her husband and children, and had none to goe unto and to converse with but Idolaters, the Moabites, then she arose to leave those coasts. Note, how *affliction shall follow affliction, to bring home such as be the Lords*: if one crosse will not doe it, another shall, as wee see in the prodigall son, and Gods dealing with *Manasses*;<sup>101</sup> for the Lord is loth to lose his owne: And therefore if one affliction happen, make good use thereof, else another shall follow, yea and another after that, till we returne home. Againe marke, that *it is then time to*

<sup>98</sup> It seems that for Bernard a woman's name is only applicable if she has status as a result of her association with men in her family.

<sup>99</sup> Bernard concludes by emphasising the importance of submission to God.

<sup>100</sup> Bernard uses the term 'Church', which his readers could identify with, rather than, for example, 'temple'.

<sup>101</sup> See 2 Chron. 33.

*leave the place of our abode, when the Godly are taken away, and none left but wicked to converse with.* Thus and for this cause many left Israel in *Jeroboams dayes*, 2 Chron. 11.13, 16, for the godly should delight in the fellow- [p. 34] ship of the godly:  *Davids* delight was in the Saints.<sup>102</sup> It is also dangerous for the Godly to frequent the company of the wicked, as a Lambe to be among Wolves.<sup>103</sup> *David* will not dwell in the tents of the wicked, neither sit among them, Ps. 26,<sup>104</sup> and it is a good mans propertie to avoid them, Ps. 1.1. And therefore let us flee the fellowship of Idolaters, 1 John 5,<sup>105</sup> 2 Cor. 6,<sup>106</sup> and the societie of evill persons. For such as can live with delight among them, are like them, are no true Converts to God: and yet not a few, which will be held religious, can make themselves merrie with vaine persons, and condemne others for too Stoicall, too censorious, for that they cannot away with fleshly and carnall delights.<sup>107</sup>

*With her daughters in law.*] It appeareth that these two did voluntarily accompany her, of their owne minds, and not by *Naomies* intreatie; this appeareth out of verse[s] 8 and 11. What moved them hereto, but *Naomies* vertues? So as we may see, that *the truly vertuous are of an attractive power*, even as the load-stone,<sup>108</sup> to draw others unto them, partly by instruction, partly by their godly conversation. Both which meanes we may thinke shee used towards these, while shee abode in Moab: for the religious cannot but incyte others unto pietie. This is worthie imitation in *Naomi*. If practice shew our Religion, it will win others, 1 Pet. 3.1, without which,

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<sup>102</sup> See Ps. 16.3.

<sup>103</sup> See Luke 10.3.

<sup>104</sup> David states that he will not sit with the wicked in Ps. 26.5 The preference for being a doorkeeper in the house of God rather than dwelling in the tents of wickedness is expressed in Ps. 84.10.

<sup>105</sup> Specifically verse 21.

<sup>106</sup> Specifically verse 16.

<sup>107</sup> This is evidently Bernard's view of those within the Church who did not belong to the puritan element.

<sup>108</sup> 'loadstone': 'Magnetic oxide of iron; also, a piece of this used as a magnet.' (OEDO).

even the most glorious profession in words, hath no operation, no power to perswade. And here also was a mercy of God to this poore old woman, that shee lost not all [p. 35] outward comfort, shee had some to keepe her company in her adversitie. It is *a good grace, to be content to beare the poore company in a miserable estate*; they be true friends, which will sit downe upon a dunghill with *Job*, to mourne with him. Well, here were two daughters of *Moab*, which would accompany *Naomi*, poore and afflicted *Naomi*. A reproofe to counterfeit friends, of which now the world is full, never more.

*That shee might returne from the countrey of Moab.*] This is the end why she arose, that is, left the particular place of her dwelling, not to goe into some other place in Moab, as hoping of better successe there, but quite to forsake the countrey. The kindnesse received there, could not hold her, when she perceived the Lord to call her home, partly by afflictions in Moab, and partly by mercies now in Israel. *Outward kindnesse of Worldlings cannot keepe the godly with them, when God calleth them away from them*, either by afflictions, or by checke of conscience, or by falling into sinne by them, or by feeling the want of the godly, and the use of Gods publike service, or else by seeing or hearing of Gods favour to his people. When these or such like doe call upon the godly to come away, they cannot by any worldly pleasure, profit, or familiar acquaintance, or kinde intertainment stay with such men; they be like *Abrahams* servant, which could not be held with rest and good cheare, to stay in *Bethuels* house <Gen. 24<sup>109</sup>>; nor *David* in *Ziklag*, when he had liberty to goe into Judah <2 Sam. 2.2>.<sup>110</sup> For their spirits differ, so as they can- [p. 36] not truely affect one another, and the godly finde crosses among the wicked, to

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<sup>109</sup> Specifically, verse 56.

<sup>110</sup> Lavater uses this example in commending Naomi's return to the people of God (24r-24v).

hunt them out from their societie, and they cannot but feare, in a godly jealousie, to be made the worse by them, for that they know their own weakenesse. And therefore let us labour for this grace, to leave the society of the ungodly, lest wee be insnared by them: and if we be with them, let it be by warrant of our calling, or of necessity, and onely so long as we have hope to doe them good, and to win them; but if they bee found obstinate, forsake them, Jer. 51.9.<sup>111</sup>

*For she had heard in the countrey of Moab.]* That is, while she did stay in that countrey, newes was brought of plenty in Israel. As the famine did drive her from thence, so now food being there, and the crosses she found in Moab, mooved her to returne backe againe. *As adversitie maketh many to leave the Church, so the prosperity thereof bringeth many unto it;* some in truth and love, as *Naomi* heere, others for the world, or for feare, Esth. 8.17. Let us then pray for the Churches prosperity: yet not then are wee to trust all that come within her lappe. Note againe, how *Naomi* in her greatest distresse heard of comfort to her Countrey, to bring her home againe. *God is often the neerest in mercy to helpe, when in mans reason hee seemeth to be furthest off.* Thus was God with *Jonah* in the Whales belly, and with the three Children in the Furnace,<sup>112</sup> with *Daniel* in the Den, with *David* to helpe against most present danger, 1 Sam. 23.26-7. *Peter*, the very night before his intended death by *Herod*, must be delivered:<sup>113</sup> and so the Gunpowder plot here bee discovered. And God thus suffereth his so long, and to come to so narrow a straite, before he set them free, and shew himselfe; to humble them, to beate them out of confidence in themselves, to shew his power and mercy the more, that they

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<sup>111</sup> This exhortation is echoed on p. 240, where Bernard warns against engaging with unnecessary perils.

<sup>112</sup> See Dan. 3.

<sup>113</sup> See Acts 12.1-17.

may see more fully his goodnesse to them, to make them thankfull, obedient, and the more in utmost perils to rely upon him. We are not to despaire in the greatest dangers, nor to thinke our selves forgotten in great extremities, but then seeke to God, trust in him, and doubt not of comfort. God will have *Lazarus* in the grave, before Christ restore him to life; and *Isaac* bound upon the Altar, before he forbid *Abraham* to slay him: Till the ship be ready to sinke, Christ will not awake, Matt. 8.25-6, for so the Lord is more seene in his power, and mercy towards his.<sup>114</sup>

*How the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread.*] By bread is meant all necessary food, but especially corne, of which bread is made. Here the Lord is made the giver thereof to the Israelites called his people, whom in mercy hee visited, to bestow his blessings upon: for so is *visited*<sup>115</sup> here taken, and in Gen. 21.1; Luke 1.68; Jer. 29.10. Note from hence these things:

I. That *God seeth his people in adversity and want, and commeth in his due time to helpe them*, Exod. 3.7-8, which is from his meere mercy, and the stability of his love and promise to his people: And therefore we may learn patience in affliction, [p. 38] and not bee impatient, as if God had forgotten; nor murmure, lest the Lord punish us < Ps. 13.1; 1 Cor. 10<sup>116</sup>>.

II. That *God hath ever had more specially a people for his owne, called his people*. Thus were certaine called the sonnes of God, Gen. 6.<sup>117</sup> Thus after were the

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<sup>114</sup> This passage has close similarities to Topsell's exposition of Ruth 1.6, in which Topsell expands on the Lord deferring to help until the utmost necessity. (Topsell 27-8). Bernard uses four of the same biblical examples as Topsell, as well as omitting some and supplying some of his own. Lavater does not discuss this subject, indicating that Bernard was familiar with Topsell's commentary.

<sup>115</sup> Here, Bernard refers to the different meanings of 'visit' by God, to which Lavater and Topsell draw attention (Lavater 24r; Topsell 28-30). 'visit': 'Of the Deity: To come to (persons) in order to comfort or benefit.' 'To inflict hurt, harm, or punishment upon (a person); to deal severely or hardly with (persons or things); †to cut off, cause to die.' (OEDO).

<sup>116</sup> Specifically, verse 10.

<sup>117</sup> Bernard again refers to this ambiguous biblical passage. His earlier references to it (pp. 26, 27-8) were disapproving of the marriages between the sons of God and the daughters of men.

Israelites his, Deut. 7.6 and 26.18, and such be now true Christians, 1 Pet. 2.9; Rev. 18.4. These he chose not for any merit in them, but of his meere love, Deut. 7.8; Eph. 1.4. This should make us to examine our selves, how we be Gods people, whether, according to Creation, or after the worke of Regeneration: for these differ from the other greatly, in the graces of Gods Spirit, and holy conversation, Ezek. 11.19 and 36.26-7; Ps. 15, in glorious titles, Deut. 26.19; Exod. 19.6; 1 Pet. 2.9; Rev. 1.6, and in heavenly prerogatives; as in peace with God, Rom. 5.1, in free accesse, with a holy boldnesse to God in Christ, Heb. 4,<sup>118</sup> in having God ever with them, Matt. 18.20, in this blessing, that all things worke together for the best to them, Rom. 8,<sup>119</sup> and in being a Communion of Saints, to whom is belonging the forgivenessse of sinnes, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Wee are therefore to labour to bee of this sort of Gods people.

III. That *corporall food, and the necessities of this life are Gods gift*, Lev. 26.4-5; Deut. 11.14-15; Hos. 2.8-9; Joel 2.19. It is he that maketh the earth fruitfull, he giveth raine, and with-holds it, Hos. 2.8-9;<sup>120</sup> Amos 4.7, and man without him can doe nothing, Ps. 127.2;<sup>121</sup> Hag. 1.6; Deut. 8.18. [p. 39] Praise him for these blessings, Joel 2.26, in the want of them acknowledge it from God, and goe to him, pray to him, Matt. 6, and this must bee done in an humiliation of our selves, for the affliction, 2 Chron. 7.14; Joel 2.16-17, 19. If wee looke for these blessings, we are to serve him, because they bee his gift, and to such hath hee promised them, Lev. 26.3; Deut. 11.13, 16. Let this reprove such as forget God, doe not praise him, nor serve him for these blessings, and let it confute such as ascribe them to the heavens, or to

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<sup>118</sup> Specifically, verse 16.

<sup>119</sup> Specifically, verse 28.

<sup>120</sup> The 1628 edition has 'Osea' rather than 'Hos' in this reference.

<sup>121</sup> Verse 1 is also relevant.

the industry of man, never remembring the precept of *Moses*, Deut. 8.18, and that saying in Job 31.26-7.<sup>122</sup>

Verse 7. *Wherefore shee went forth out of the place where shee was, and her two daughters in law with her; and they went on their way to returne unto the Land of Judah.*

In the former verse, was *Naomi* her preparation for her journey; here is her setting forward: noting from whence, with whom, and whither.

*Wherefore.*] That is, because she heard of plenty in her countrey: which giveth us this to understand, which before I noted,<sup>123</sup> that *the Churches welfare procureth friends, and draweth her old acquaintance to her*: for prosperity is of an attractive vertue, and men are affected with it; this will make *Abimelech* to seeke to *Isaac*, Gen. 26.26, and *Jobs* friends gather unto him, Job 42.11. This should make us seeke the Churches prosperity; [p. 40] yea and make men frugall to preserve their estates: for prosperity gets friends (though not a few counterfeit:) and adversity maketh men to bee forsaken; and yet many which might live well, bring themselves by prodigality and lewd courses unto misery: unworthy they bee of pitty.

*Shee departed out of the place where shee was.*] In what particular place of Moab shee was in, is not named, though here to bee understood by the name *place*. There was food here, as well as in Judah, yet shee would not stay though shee was an old woman, having poore and weake attendance, the journey somewhat long for her,

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<sup>122</sup> The reference seems to be Job 31.25-28.

In treating this doctrine, Bernard marshals many biblical references, chiefly from the Old Testament, which show the importance to him of emphasising man's dependence on God.

<sup>123</sup> See p. 36.



her estate wasted, and therefore was shee to returne in a base estate, which other perhaps might cast in her teeth<sup>124</sup> for leaving Judah, and going into that idolatrous Moab;<sup>125</sup> but all these things did not withhold her from her godly purpose. And two reasons may be given for this; the love of her owne Countrey, and her piety, esteeming highly of the means of salvation. Whence may be noted:

I. That *there is a love naturally in every one to their owne Countrey*; See it in *Jethro*, Exod. 18.27; Num. 10.29-30,<sup>126</sup> and *Barzillai*, 2 Sam. 19.27.<sup>127</sup> *Jacob* would returne into Canaan out of Mesopotamia where he had gotten great riches.<sup>128</sup> And this love unto their Countrey, made men to adventure their lives in defence thereof, 2 Sam. 10.12. Therefore such are unnaturall, who will seeke the destruction thereof.<sup>129</sup>

II. That *corporall meanes cannot keepe the truely [p. 41] religious from the place where God is worshipped, if they may enjoy the meanes of life in a poore measure*. *Naomi* would not stay in Moab, though shee in Judah had nothing to maintaine her, but her hands, and that *Ruth* must gleane for bread, when they came thither. What a change *Moses* made,<sup>130</sup> wee all doe know: a crust of bread for the body is better with the food of the soule, than all carnall abundance without it. And therefore if the choyce of our dwelling be, either where bodily plenty is, without the Word, or a poore estate for the body, and plentifull instructions for the soules safety,

<sup>124</sup> 'to cast (a thing) in one's teeth': 'to reproach, upbraid, or censure with; to bring up in reproach against.' (OEDQ).

<sup>125</sup> Again, Bernard puts forward the view that the departure of the family from Judah in the time of famine was wrong. Naomi, the only surviving member of the family is represented as being held to blame by her former neighbours, although on p. 13 Bernard exonerates her.

<sup>126</sup> This biblical reference is to Hobab, the son of Jethro. Jethro was otherwise known as Raguel.

<sup>127</sup> The correct reference is probably 2 Samuel 19.37.

<sup>128</sup> Bernard refers to Jacob's time with Laban, Gen. 29-31.

<sup>129</sup> Possibly another allusion to the Gunpowder plot (see also p. 37).

<sup>130</sup> Moses was brought up in the Egyptian court but found his vocation in becoming the leader of the enslaved Israelites, Exod. 2 and 3.

let us chuse this, rather then the other.<sup>131</sup> Seeke, saith our Saviour, for the food which endureth unto eternall life, which perisheth not < John 5<sup>132</sup>>.

*And her two daughters in law with her.*] This their accompanying of her, argueth *Naomi* her singular good carriage towards them, while her sonnes lived: for if shee had beene proud, froward<sup>133</sup> and unkind, as some mothers in law have beene, they would have despised her, and shaken her off; but we see: first, how *good carriage procureth love*: and secondly, how *true love sheweth it selfe in the adversity of a friend*, Prov. 17.17, for these two forsake not poore and old *Naomi* in this her contemptible estate. Thus *Jonathan* shewed his love in  *Davids* trouble,<sup>134</sup> and *Jobs* friends, when they sate downe by him;<sup>135</sup> for true love is not tyed to outward respects: such love is false and hollow-hearted; the love of these times. We must imitate God in love, to love ever, and chiefly in [p. 42] adversity; for either love them, or not at all. Be not as the Shadow which sheweth it selfe only in sunne-shine; nor as the Swallow which chatters, and sings over thy chimney in warme Summer, but cannot be scene in Winter. Friends onely in appearance, shape their love like to the Devill, who onely maketh a shew of love to man, and is ever sinister in the intendment.

*And they went on their way to returne to Judah.*] It seemeth by this, that the two women came out to returne with *Naomi*, who onely is properly said to returne, because she came out of Judah, and they had a purpose to goe thorow with her to the

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<sup>131</sup> Bernard here is urging his readers to live where they can attend a church of the kind of which he approves, that is one which enforces 'godly discipline'. He does so in a way that relates his advice to the dualistic antithesis of spirit and flesh derived from the epistles of St Paul.

<sup>132</sup> The correct reference is John 6.27.

<sup>133</sup> 'froward': 'Disposed to go counter to what is demanded or what is reasonable; perverse, difficult to deal with, hard to please; refractory, ungovernable; †also, in a wider sense, bad, evilly-disposed, "naughty".' (OEDO).

<sup>134</sup> Jonathan's protection of David is narrated in 1 Sam. 20.30-42.

<sup>135</sup> See Job 2.11-13.

end, and to leave their own native soile, their parents and friends, which was a great degree of love, but yet we may reade that *Orpha* afterwards gave over. *To begin well, and to make an onset to goodnesse, is easie to many, but to go on to the end, is of speciall grace.* *Cain* began and made an onset to godlinesse, so did *Joash* King of Judah.<sup>136</sup> *Jehu* did valiantly for a while.<sup>137</sup> *Judas* seemed to bee approved by his fellowes, and to live without suspicion for a time. The same may bee said of *Ananias* and *Saphira*, of *Simon Magus*, of *Demas*, *Hymeneus*, *Alexander*, and *Philetus*,<sup>138</sup> with many moe;<sup>139</sup> but their calling was not effectuell: called they were, but not elected.<sup>140</sup> their hearts were full of hypocrisie, which wil at length breake out. Therefore let none thinke well of themselves for faire beginnings, because they that continue to the end, shall onely be saved.

[p. 43] Verse 8. *And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Goe, returne each to her mothers house: the Lord deale kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me.*

*Naomi* seeth their kindnesse, and weighing afore-hand all circumstances,<sup>141</sup> beginneth to make triall of the soundnesse of their love, and to know upon what

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<sup>136</sup> Bernard is thinking of the account of Joash's reign in 2 Chron. 24.

<sup>137</sup> The story of Jehu is told in 2 Kings 9-10. He is commended for his ruthless destruction of Ahab's family and of the worship of Baal but later 'made Israel to sin' (2 Kings 10.31).

<sup>138</sup> Ananias and Saphira, together with Simon Magus, are sinful characters in Acts. The remaining reprobates are referred to in Paul's two epistles to Timothy.

<sup>139</sup> 'moe': 'Other individuals of the kind specified; other persons or things in addition to those mentioned.' (OEDO).

<sup>140</sup> Bernard refers to Matt. 22.14 ('For many are called, but few *are* chosen'). See the Introduction section 3 for an explanation of how this passage can be seen to illuminate his position regarding predestination.

<sup>141</sup> Bernard represents Naomi as acting in a premeditated way in testing Ruth and Orpah. He is increasingly definite in his adoption of the interpretation that Naomi was deliberately testing them as he proceeds through the narrative, in preference to an alternative interpretation that she was acting out of concern for their temporal welfare. The concern of the early modern commentators on *Ruth* with

ground it standeth, as appeareth out of the verses 11, 12, 13. The words consist of an exhortation, and a petition to God for them, rendering a reason thereof.

*And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law.*] To this place, there is no mention of any speech of *Naomi*, but onely what shee did: First, in following her husband into Moab, verses 1, 2, and then, of her<sup>142</sup> leaving that Countrey to returne into Judah, verses 6, 7. Hitherto her Story is of her walking, and not of her words and talking: it seemeth her tongue did not hang loose, to be upon every touch tolling, as some womens be. And this her silence commendeth her vertue therein,<sup>143</sup> and also giveth us to know, that she did not sollicite her daughters to go with her, but that they voluntarily undertooke the journey: for if shee had requested them, their love had not so appeared, neither could she have tried them, by intreating them to returne backe.

*Goe and returne.*] How farre on the way they were come, is not noted; but on the way they were, before she spake thus to them; which she [p. 44] did not, as carelesse of their soules, or of any doubt, whether God would provide for them, who would forsake their country, and become proselytes; but two reasons may be alledged why shee exhorteth them to returne home againe. First was her love to them, for their kindnesses formerly to her and hers, as appeareth by her prayer, and therefore shee might now seeme to be loth to trouble them, though their company in the way might have beene comfortable, except shee had knowne certainly how to have recompenced their love. Taking this for one, we learne, that *a true Lover is loth to disadvantage a friend or friends for private respects to himselfe*: for true love seeketh also the good of a friend beloved; and a sound-harted friend will follow the

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the salvation of Ruth and Orpah, on the one hand, and the interests of the religious community, on the other, constitutes the rationale for testing in their view, as is pointed out in the discussion of testing and Bernard's presentation of Naomi's rigour in the Introduction section 6.1.

<sup>142</sup> There is an error in the 1628 edition, where 'his' is put instead of 'her'.

<sup>143</sup> Bernard approval of Naomi's silence is consistent with conduct book prescriptions.

Apostles advice, 1 Cor. 10.24, not seeke his owne, but his friends well-fare. But this alas is contrary to our times, when now men are all for themselves; which selfe-love is contrarie to Christs commandement, to love our neighbour as our selves; it is against the communion and fellowship of Chr[i]stians as members one of another; it is contrary to the end of our labour in our callings, 2 Cor. 12.14;<sup>144</sup> Eph. 4.28, which is, to doe good to others; contrary to that care which God commandeth, for the preservation of other mens estate, Deut. 22.2, 4; Exod. 23.4-5;<sup>145</sup> contrary to *Abrahams* practice, Gen. 23.9,<sup>146</sup> whose children we must be, and whose workes we must doe. This selfe-love is the originall of all bribery, extortion, usury, deceit, fraud, oppression, and unjust dea- [p. 45] lings among men; this maketh men envious, that they cannot rejoyce in other mens welfare, and this maketh men without compassion in another mans misery, if they themselves live at ease: this roote of bitterness must be rooted out. The second reason was her want of meanes, to give them comfort in the world, to provide for them necessities, or convenient matches, as her words imply in verses 12, 13: shee knew them to have friends and parents in Moab, but none in Judah, and therefore shee was loth to make them worse, and to carry them to an unknowne place, except shee could better have provided for them with some certainty.<sup>147</sup> True love will not make worse, where it cannot make better. But here it may be demanded, *Whether Naomi did well, to perswade them to returne?*

<sup>144</sup> Bernard may be thinking of 1 Cor. 4.12, where Paul reminds the Corinthians that he had laboured with his own hands in his service to the Church.

<sup>145</sup> A semi-colon has been supplied, replacing the full stop at the end of the biblical reference in the 1628 edition, to clarify the sense.

<sup>146</sup> Bernard refers to Abraham's willingness to pay a fair price for the cave where Sarah his wife was to be buried.

<sup>147</sup> Bernard follows Topsell (*Topsell* 35-6) in regarding positively what he sees as Naomi's concern for the temporal welfare of Ruth and Orpah, in contrast to Lavater's condemnation of allowing this to weigh against the right religion of the women (*Lavater* 33r). The two later commentators are here more open to recognising the acts of kindness done by one individual for another which is a leading theme of *Ruth*.

I answer, If she had done it in carelesnesse of their soules, or in a coldnesse of religion, shee had offended: but it was partly in her love to them for their outward estate, not knowing how to pleasure them, if they should take such paines to goe with her, and leave their owne country, and partly out of her wisdomes to trie them, whether indeed they fully resolved to goe with her, let fall out, what might fall out. And this was praiseworthy in her, thus to try their soundnesse: for hereby shee found one rotten at the core, and the other most sound. And thus should wee also doe in these deceitfull dayes, trie before we trust such as offer themselves to come among the godly, as also did our Saviour, Luke 9.57-8, lest when they hastily intertaine Religion, they [p. 46] as suddainely fall backe to the reproach of the Gospell, and blemish of such as admitted them without tryall. If any aske why shee perswaded them not to stay at home whilst they were there, but to let them goe on the way, and then to will them to returne backe? I answer, It may be that she tooke their comming forth to be of courtesie to take leave of her, after she had gone somewhat on her journey; which kindnesse there was no reason to refuse; but perceiving that they would goe on, shee then fell to make tryall of them, and to understand what might leade them thereto. And this was better done in the way, than at home, to discerne more fully of their resolution.<sup>148</sup> *In the tryall of others it is then best done, when the same may most appeare; this is wisdomes.*

*Each to her mothers house.*] Here is an argument to move them to returne backe, because they had naturall parents alive, and shee but a mother in law. Shee trieth them with this first, to see whether nature wrought more then grace.<sup>149</sup> This

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<sup>148</sup> Here Bernard is following the procedure he outlines in Faithfull Shepheard of preventing objections, specifically of objections suggested by the actual wording of the text (77).

<sup>149</sup> Bernard seizes on the argument that Naomi was trying Ruth and Orpah, as opposed to being concerned for their temporal welfare.

she knew to be a strong pull-backe, and that nature must first be subdued to follow soundly the course of godlinesse. We must forsake father and mother for the Gospell, saith Christ,<sup>150</sup> yea and deny our selves. If thus we can doe, then are we to be admitted into the fellowship of the faithfull. These words shew, they were not naturall sisters, because *Naomi* willeth each of them to go to her mothers house, as having either of them a mother. In that *Naomi* thus speaketh, we may further note:

I. That *of either parent, children are drawne with [p. 47] most affection to their mothers*; because all children have most of their mothers, being conceived in them, long borne of them, and nursed by them;<sup>151</sup> also, for that mothers are more tender-hearted towards them: and most familiar with them: therefore here is their mothers house named, though afterward *Ruths* father, Chapter 2.11. And yet some children we see ready enough to despise their mothers, which is contrary to nature, contrary to the commandement, Exod. 20; Prov. 1.8. Yea, it is great ingratitude to requite so the great paines in conception, in bearing, in nursing, which a child can never recompence: and therefore a curse is pronounced against such children, Deut. 27.16; Prov. 20.20, and of this the Prophet *Ezekiel* complaineth, Chapter 22.7.

II. That *poore widowes are to be maintained of their able parents, when they be left alone, and cannot maintaine themselves*, Lev. 22.13; 1 Tim. 5.16. The law of nature, and we see, the Law of God leadeth thereto; and *Naomi* knew not whither else to send them: And whither should children goe, but unto their parents? If this be so, then let parents see to the well matching of their children, to prevent their povertie if it may be, and a second charge of them. Let children be then ruled of

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<sup>150</sup> See Matt. 19.29.

<sup>151</sup> Bernard notes the view that breastfeeding implants mothers' love in children when he advocates breastfeeding in chapter 4, contributing to a debate on the subject by both male and female writers. See the Introduction section 6.4.

their parents in taking marriage upon them, seeing parents are to be troubled againe with them, if need require. Yea and let husbands have care, when they have received their wives portions, so to husband the same, that they may leave them to live after them, and not to be againe [p. 48] chargeable to their friends.<sup>152</sup>

*The Lord deale kindly with you.*] Her prayer for them, which was her best recompence for their love, being now poore, and not otherwise able to requite them their kindnesse. Note hence,

I. That *it is a duty to pray for those which doe either us, or ours good*: So doth *Naomi* here; so *Boaz* for *Ruth*, Chapter 2.12;<sup>153</sup> *David* for *Abigails* good counsell, 1 Sam. 25.33; and *Saul* for *Davids* sparing his life, 1 Sam. 24.19. And this duty let us performe, as Christ in the forme of Prayer hath taught us, Matt. 6, and not pray onely for our selves, as worldlings doe, nor to thinke a favour done, is requited with I thanke you onely, and that prayer for a blessing upon them is not required, especially if they be superiours: and yet we see here the practice of superiours to inferiours.

II. That *at parting, friends are to pray one for another*; as we may see the practice of it in *Isaac*, Gen. 28.1, 3, *Laban*, Gen. 31.55, *Jacob*, Gen. 43.14, and in *Paul*, Acts 20.36. It is very Christian like, an argument of love, and desire of their owne welfare, which cannot be without Gods protection: put this therefore into practice. True it is, that men now doe it, but it is not with that reverence, nor expressed with that earnest desire, as is meet and befitting in such a case.

III. That *the godly are perswaded, that the Lord is a mercifull Rewarder of the duties of love, which one doth towards another*. This *Naomi* her prayer to God for them here teacheth: for the godly know, that the Lord hath commanded such duties;

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<sup>152</sup> Bernard deals more fully with the importance of husbands providing dowers for their wives on pp. 358-9.

<sup>153</sup> Semicolons have been placed after the biblical references in this sentence for consistency.



and [p. 49] what he commandeth to be done, that will hee reward in the doer. And hereof let us bee well perswaded, this wil make us do our duties cheerefully, though men requite not our paines, because God will. By this reason Saint *Paul* encourageth servants to their duties, and to doe what they ought heartily, Col. 3.24.

IV. That *children should so well deserve of parents, yea though but parents in law, as they may bee moved heartily to pray for them*: as *Naomi* doth in this place. A good carriage is a duty towards all, then much more to parents; and the prayers of parents is a meanes to put a blessing upon their children. But some children are so farre from doing their duties to their parents to procure a blessing, as they with *Cham* deserve a curse; such a one was rebellious *Absalom*, bloody *Cain*: such a one was *Ruben*, *Simeon* and *Levi*, whom the Lord punished.<sup>154</sup>

V. That *God will not onely barely reward, but so deale with us, as wee deale with others*. This *Naomi* begges for, this the Lord in mercy will doe, Matt. 7.2, for our encouragement to well doing, he will reward us according to our works. This should stirre us up to doe our duties unto our brethren, knowing that as we doe, we shall be done unto.

*As yee have dealt with the dead and with mee.*] Here *Naomi* acknowledgeth their loving obedience and good carriage towards their husbands when they were alive, and now to her, they being dead:<sup>155</sup> and this maketh her to pray thus for them.

[p. 50] Note here, first, that *daughters of a bad race, may proove good wives, and good children in law sometime*: as these daughters of Idolaters did; when God

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<sup>154</sup> Ham (Cham in the Septuagint) was culpable because he broadcast his father's nakedness (Gen. 9.22). The rebellion of Absalom against David is narrated in 2 Sam. 15-18. In linking Reuben, Simeon and Levi, Bernard is evidently recalling their father Jacob's reproaches in Gen. 49, of Reuben for lying with his father's concubine, and of Simeon and Levi for their cruel treachery towards Shechem and Hamor (Gen. 34).

<sup>155</sup> Bernard attributes to Ruth and Orpah relations with their husbands and mother figure in accordance with early modern conduct books (see the Introduction section 5).

restraineth nature, and giveth grace withall. For many times there are tractable and gentle natures, where Religion is not grafted, these by good instruction, and Gods blessing, may prove excellent wives. Children therefore are not ever to bee censured according to their parents; though it is dangerous to graft in a bad stocke: for an hundred to one, but a *Michol* will make a *David* know that shee is a *Sauls* daughter. But here, women Christians are taught to shew themselves good wives and children, or else these daughters of the Heathen will condemne them, whom *Naomi* commendeth for good wives. Now, to bee a good wife, a woman must know her duty, and be very desirous to doe it, which stands in love unfeigned, in feare to offend, in cheerefull obedience, in meekenesse of spirit, and in sympathizing with her husband in prosperity and adversity <Eph. 5.22; Col. 3.18; 1 Pet. 3<sup>156</sup>>.<sup>157</sup> But where is the woman? where is this *Sarah*, this *Rebecca*? Shee will answer perhaps, Where there is an *Abraham*, and an *Isaac*; for a good husband will make a good wife; a good *John*, a good *Joane*: the body will obey, where the head knoweth how to rule well.<sup>158</sup>

II. That *good and truely loving wives love their husbands parents for their husbands sake*, as these did *Naomi*. For the wife and husband are one, and should be of one heart, and the one love, [p. 51] where the other liketh: and a good wife striveth to please and content her husband, in shewing love to his friends. Shee will

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<sup>156</sup> Specifically, verses 1-7.

<sup>157</sup> Here, Bernard enumerates characteristics of the good wife which concur with the contemporary conduct literature (see the Introduction section 6.1). He mentions as one characteristic ‘sympathizing with her husband in prosperity and adversity’ This pertains to marital companionship (see the Introduction section 5).

<sup>158</sup> The needfulness of a good husband for the good wife is expressed in the early modern conduct literature, see Thomas Gataker *A Good Wife Gods Gift*, (1620) 23. The superiority of the husband in the relationship is noted in the discussion of marital companionship in the Introduction section 5.

not bee like such lewd wives, women not worthy to bee wives, which hate their husbands kindred, and brow-beate them out of their houses.<sup>159</sup>

Verse 9. *The Lord grant you, that you may find rest each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them, and they lift up their voice and wept.*

*Naomi* her continuing in prayer for them, as before in generall, now in particular for a speciall blessing. This verse containeth a petition, an act of a valediction, and the passion which is wrought.

*The Lord grant you, that you may find rest each of you in the house of her husband.* Shee prayeth here for their second marriage, and that the same might be blessed of the Lord, the chief Marriage-maker, so as it might procure them rest, and be a quiet contented marriage to their comfort. Note hence:

I. That *godly and wise friends pray not onely in generall, but in particular, as they know them to stand in neede, for whom they doe pray*: as here *Naomi* for good husbands for her daughters in law; for wee should take notice of our friends wants, and so pray for them, and not rest in generals.<sup>160</sup>

II. *Godly mothers in law are hearty well-wishers to their children in law*, whether they bee such by a [p. 52] former husband departed, or by another husband living, or by the marriage of their children, as *Naomi* is here mother to these: for the love they beare to their husbands, and because godly women know themselves to bee Stepmothers, stept in to be in stead of naturall mothers, and therefore doe make

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<sup>159</sup> Again (as on pp. 22-3) Bernard shifts to the mode of the controversy about women.

<sup>160</sup> Bernard's instruction as to how the godly should pray, an extension of his earlier reference to Matt. 6 (see pp. 39, 48), reflects his emphasis on catechizing. His Common Catechisme includes teaching on how to say the Lord's prayer.

conscience to supply their want: which if it be so, or ought to be so, it reproveth those Stepdames, which are unkind and cruell to their children in law, and cannot endure the sight of them.

III. That *second Marriages be lawfull*, 1 Tim. 5.11, 14. The reason is given by the Apostle, 1 Cor. 7.9, 36. Which confuteth such heretikes as in former times have denied this, contrary to the Apostles Doctrine, and the example of *Abraham*,<sup>161</sup> in marrying *Keturah*.<sup>162</sup>

IV. That *husbands are to bee their wives rest*, Chapter 3.1, and they are so called, because of the desire of women to marry, and because they seeke rest in their marriage, and for that loving wives take rest and contentment in their owne husbands, who ought therefore to be rest unto them, which shall bee if they doe love them, as they ought, Eph. 5.22,<sup>163</sup> if they wisely governe them, 1 Pet. 3.7, if they provide and allow them what is meete, according to their abilitie, in all decencie and honest contentment; if they keepe their faith plight, and rejoyce in them, and with them, they cannot but find rest. But unloving and fierce natures, *Lamech*-like husbands, a word and a blow, or terrible threats:<sup>164</sup> miserable and nig- [p. 53] gardly *Nabals*,<sup>165</sup> so prodigall and unthrifty, drunken or adulterous husbands are so farre from being poore womens rest, as they make them weary of their lives. But now if husbands must bee their wives rest, and that they looke for it, then wives must care to make their husbands so to them, by willing obedience, by meekenesse of spirit, very acceptable to God, 1 Pet. 3.4, by seeking to please them, by speaking to them in a

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<sup>161</sup> The present edition corrects the 1628 edition, which does not italicise the last three letters of 'Abraham'.

<sup>162</sup> See Gen. 25.1.

<sup>163</sup> The correct reference is probably Eph. 5.25 or Eph. 5.28 or Eph. 5.33.

<sup>164</sup> See Gen. 4.23-4.

<sup>165</sup> See 1 Sam. 25.3.

loving reverence, and to keepe silence, when words may offend, or not doe good, as wise *Abigail* did,<sup>166</sup> by a wise frugall course, and good huswifery, as the woman in the Proverbs, Chapter 31. Speake not foolishly, as *Jobs* wife, to thy husband in his grieffe, nor mock him not, like a barren *Michol*, nor abuse him not, as *Potiphars* wife would have done her husband,<sup>167</sup> nor be impatient for not having thine own will, as *Rachel* was,<sup>168</sup> but rest in his will, and thou shalt find him thy rest. Here is also an use for parents to match so their daughters, as they may get husbands as rests for them; and this will be, when they marry their daughters betime, to men of wisdom, fit for yeeres, not unfit for birth and estate, well agreeing in qualities and good conditions, and in religion.

V. That it is Gods blessing to bee peaceably married, Prov. 18.22 and 19.14. He is the Marriage-maker, whosoever are the meanes; and he is the disposer and framer of their hearts one to another: therefore let God herein be sought unto, and let him receive praises and thanks for [p. 54] such a blessing, the greatest corporall comfort in this world.

*Then shee kissed them.*] This action we may find, foure-fold; *Carnall*, as in fleshly lust, *Hypocriticall*, as was *Joabs*<sup>169</sup> and *Judas*<sup>170</sup> kisse; *Holy*, of which the Apostle speakes, 1 Cor. 16.20, or *Civill*, as here. This was used at the meeting of friends, Gen. 29.11 and 33.4, at their departing, Gen. 31.55; 2 Sam. 19.39; Acts 20.37. This was used between men<sup>171</sup> and men, Gen. 45.15; Exod. 4.27; 2 Sam. 19.39, between women and women, as here in this place, and between some

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<sup>166</sup> See 1 Sam. 25. Abigail's circumventing of her husband's will is a dangerous example from the point of view of conduct books, and Bernard touches on it very discreetly.

<sup>167</sup> See Gen. 39.

<sup>168</sup> See Gen. 30.1.

<sup>169</sup> See 2 Sam. 20.9.

<sup>170</sup> See Matt. 26.48-9, Mark 14.44-5 and Luke 22.47-8.

<sup>171</sup> A comma here in the 1628 edition has been omitted in the present edition.

men<sup>172</sup> and some sort of women, as between husband and wife in meeting and departing, parents and children, and nigh kinsfolke, Gen. 29.11, but not strangers, nor others not of kindred, to avoid the suspicion of wantonnesse. It was honestly used, to testifie love and unitie, as *Isaac* did to *Jacob*, Gen. 27.26, and therefore in the Primitive Church, before they received the Sacrament, they thus saluted one another <*Justin Apologia* 2, *Beza* on 2 Cor. 13.<sup>173</sup>>.

*And they lift up their voice and wept.*] Here was an answerable affection to the kindnesse of her action; her signe of love, was not without love againe to her: for it was not a few silent teares from the eyes, but a passion of the heart, breaking forth into wailing and weeping;<sup>174</sup> so as their voice of mourning was heard. An argument of love and true affection towards her. This is rare love between mothers in law<sup>175</sup> and daughters in law, in these daies. But concerning weeping, it is used in Scripture:

[p. 55] I. To expresse sorrow, as at the parting of friends, *Joseph* at his fathers departing,<sup>176</sup> *Abraham* at *Sarahs*,<sup>177</sup> *Joash* at *Elishas*, 2 Kings 13.14, and when friends must leave one another, though death separate them not; as when *Jonathan* and *David* parted, 1 Sam. 20.41. And who can but weepe, if true love be there, when friends must bid adieu one to another, and especially for ever, as we may see in Acts 20.37?

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<sup>172</sup> A comma here in the 1628 edition has been omitted in the present edition.

<sup>173</sup> Specifically, verse 12. The kiss as used in the primitive Church is explained by Beza in his edition of the New Testament (1565) 347, where the discussion of 2 Cor. 13.12 occurs. He refers to Justin, who mentions such a kiss in his first *Apology*, 1.65.2. See Justin Martyr, *Justin, Philosopher and Martyr: Apologies* 253. Bernard evidently copies Beza's incorrect reference to Justin.

<sup>174</sup> Bernard refers here to the contemporary theory of the passions. This drew principally on Aristotle as interpreted by Aquinas. The theory is the basis of Robert Burton's popular *The Anatomy of Melancholy* which had been first published in 1621.

<sup>175</sup> A comma here in the 1628 edition has been omitted in the present edition.

<sup>176</sup> Joseph's reaction to his fathers death, Gen. 50.1, is referred to.

<sup>177</sup> Abraham's weeping at Sarah's death is related in Gen. 23.2.

II. For very joy, as *Josephs* sight of his brethren, Gen. 45.14, and so *Jacob* at *Josephs* comming to him, Gen. 46.29, so did *Jacob* in meeting with *Rachel*, Gen. 29.11. Such true loving natures have beene in the godly in former times; but now men are lovers of themselves, without naturall affection, 1 Tim. 3.<sup>178</sup>

III. In pittie and compassion, from a mercifull heart, to behold the miseries of others, as *Job* did for the poore, Chapter 30.25, *Esay* for the people, Chapter 22.4, so *Jeremy*, Chapter. 4.19 and 9.1 and 13.17, Christ Jesus for the Jewes, Luke 19.41. This is a charitable and a holy weeping, when men can weepe for the miseries of other, corporall, but chiefly spirituall[,] as *David* did, because men kept not Gods Law, Ps. 119.<sup>179</sup>

IV. Sometime some will weepe in the apprehension of the kindnesse shewed to them, where none but utmost extremity is deserved, 1 Sam. 24.16. Now, if  *Davids* forbearing of *Saul*, wrought in *Saul* this passion: how should we be moved to consider of Christs love to us, and our cruelty against him?

[p. 56] Verse 10. *And they said unto her, Surely wee will returne with thee unto thy people.*

*Before* was noted their affection; here is set downe their resolution, which was to accompany her, and also how farre.

*And they said unto her.*] All this while they heard her, they accompanied her, but no mention of any speech hitherto made unto her: but now necessity compelleth them to breake silence. Which though it be a speciall jewell in women, who are too

<sup>178</sup> The correct reference is 2 Tim. 3.2-3. This biblical passage refers to behaviour characteristic of life as the end of the world approaches.

<sup>179</sup> Specifically, verse 136.

tonugue-ripe [sic], yet sometime necessity enforceth them. If this might bee the onely key to make them speake, they then speaking, were worthy attention, if withall they would speake in wisdom, and within compasse, knowing when againe to keepe silence.<sup>180</sup>

*Surely we will returne.*] That is, dissuade us not thus to leave thee; for we are resolved to go with thee in this thy returne home. Where note, that *an earnest affection suffereth not easily a separation from the party affected*. For the truth of this, see it in any sort of love, as in carnall love, betweene *Samson* and *Dalilah*, Judg. 16. In naturall, betweene *David* and *Absalom*.<sup>181</sup> In friendly love, betweene *Jonathan* and *David*.<sup>182</sup> and *Mephibosheth* to *David*.<sup>183</sup> also. In Christian love, as in *Paul* to the Jewes, Rom. 9.13,<sup>184</sup> and in *Moses* to the Israelites.<sup>185</sup> and in Divine love, as of Gods to us, and of blessed Martyrs towards God againe.<sup>186</sup> In all these what provocations were there to breake off, except it bee [p. 57] in Gods behalfe towards us, who offereth no occasion to make us leave him? yet where affection is settled, there will hardly be a separation: for true love liveth in the party beloved, and can no more forsake him, then himselfe. It is also full of patience to put up wrongs, and taketh every thing in the best part, and hopeth of better in the worst things. Let us hereby try our love, which is ever with peace and unity; for where discord is, there is

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<sup>180</sup> Bernard here strictly delimits women's speech, consistently with conduct book prescriptions. The claim that women are 'too tonugue-ripe' is a feature of the controversy about women.

<sup>181</sup> See 2 Sam. 13.39.

<sup>182</sup> See 1 Sam. 20.41.

<sup>183</sup> See 2 Sam. 9.6-7.

<sup>184</sup> The correct reference is Rom. 9.3-4. In this chapter Paul emphasises his Jewish credentials.

<sup>185</sup> Moses remains faithful to the Israelites in spite of their murmurings and backslidings.

<sup>186</sup> These are all examples of love overriding self-interest, in contrast to the behaviour censured in 2 Tim. 3.

Bernard does not draw attention to the fact that the case of Naomi and her daughters-in-law differs from the other examples he gives in illustrating strength of attachment between women. Bonding between women might have created an additional category but Bernard is evidently unaware of the possibility.



no love. Such then are hollow-hearted friends, which professe love, and yet upon every trifle breake out into manifest signes of hatred.

*With thee.*] As if they had said, Though thou beest our mother in law, and art but one, and a poore woman, yet thy grace and vertue is such,<sup>187</sup> as wee are content to forsake our countrey, and carnall kindred for thee; with thee will we therefore goe.<sup>188</sup> And indeede *it is better to have the company of one sound Christian, than to enjoy the fellowship of a world of worldlings.* Good *Jonathan* took more delight in one *David*, than in the society of all his fathers house: for the fellowship of the godly is comfortable, and very joyous to the soule of such as bee godly; but the company of worldlings vaine and unfruitfull to God-ward. The godly are worthy to bee affected, and loved, they be the children of the most High, and the world is not worthy of them, no not when they be in the most basest condition in the judgement of men, Heb. 11.38. And the godly are such as with whom God is for ever, who goe the way to eter- [p. 58] nall life, which whosoever looketh for, must keepe them company thither. And therefore let us joyne our selves to them, sit downe with them, delight in them, Ps. 101.6 and 16.3 and 119.63, 79, and avoid others, Prov. 23.1,<sup>189</sup> Ps. 26.4-5 and 101.3-4, 7-8.

*Unto thy people.*] Thus they call the people of Israel, Gods people, and Gods Church, to shew, that *there is a right in every particular member to the Church, as in the Church to every member, and all to Christ, and Christ to them*, 1 Cor. 12.12. For the Church is as a body, whereof Christ is the head, and every one, one anothers members. We may therefore clayme a right in one another, to care for, and watch

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<sup>187</sup> Again, Bernard emphasises Naomi's virtue, which exemplifies his subsequent outline of the characteristics of the godly, whose company is to be sought.

<sup>188</sup> Here, as elsewhere, Bernard puts words into the mouths of the characters. This instance can be seen to exemplify what Elizabeth D. Harvey terms ventriloquism. See the Introduction section 6.1.

<sup>189</sup> The correct reference may be Prov. 24.1.

over one another; wee may clayme a right in all the Churches Rites and divine Ordinances of God belonging thereto, for our salvation: and therefore should every member care for the preservation of the whole, and the whole for every member, and take their wrongs to heart. Lastly, note out of this Verse, that both the women, in their passion, speake the same thing; but yet, upon more deliberation, one of them calleth backe her word. By which wee may see, that *in passionate affection more will be spoken than acted*: as wee may here see in *Orpha* her promise; in *Saul* also, 1 Sam. 24.16-17 and 26.21;<sup>190</sup> and in *Dauids* heat of spirit, 1 Sam. 25.32.<sup>191</sup> For passion causeth men to speake unadvisedly, and more than they would, if they did consider thereof; yea, in passion men are not themselves, neither can the hypocrisie of the heart be discer- [p. 59] ned, no, not of the parties themselves at the present instant of time, which maketh such to speake better than they either can or will do afterwards; as appeareth here in *Orpha*, and in *Saul*. Wee are not to valew words uttered in passion, nor to regard them, either to advantage our selves, or to harme the speaker, as many doe, who catch men in their sudden speeches, sometime to gaine by them, sometime to trouble them. This ought not to be; Charitie would teach better things.<sup>192</sup>

Verse 11. *And Naomi said, Turne againe, my daughters: Why will you goe with me? Are there yet more sonnes in my wombe, that they may bee your husbands?*

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<sup>190</sup> A semicolon has been placed here after the biblical reference for consistency.

<sup>191</sup> The correct reference may be 1 Sam. 25.22.

<sup>192</sup> Bernard here shows his interest in contemporary passion theory, as expounded in the works of Timothy Bright (1551?-1615), Thomas Wright (1561-1624) and Robert Burton (1577-1640). He claims that speaking in passion may result in not keeping one's word. Bernard later emphasises the importance of keeping one's word (pp. 294, 311-12, 329, 334-5). Here, his emphasis is on not taking advantage of those speaking in passion.

*Naomies* reply unto their speech, and second triall of them: wherein is an Exhortation, and a double Interrogation; the first moving to a more serious examination of their resolution; and the second, a reason of her continued Exhortation.

*And Naomi said.*] She maketh a second essay<sup>193</sup> upon them, though shee saw their passion, and heard their resolution; for she knew, that *a sound triall is not made at once*. Wee see *Orpha* withstood the first, and made as good a shew as *Ruth*, both in her teares and talke: yet soone after shee gave over. With these faire onsets Satan was well acquainted; and therefore both with *Job* and Christ, though he prevailed not at the first, yet hoped to overcome at the last. *Constancie* standeth not [p. 60] in one act, neitherr is therein to bee discerned: And therefore let none thinke they have sufficient triall of any, because they have made once an essay with them, in any matter; neither let any man thinke that he hath done valiantly, because he hath resisted a temptation once, and could not be overcome: for thou maiest be set upon againe and againe; and if after many, thou beest overcome, thou hast lost thy glory in the rest.

*Turne againe, my daughters.*] Of the exhortation before in the 8 verse.<sup>194</sup> Here *Naomi* kindly calleth them her Daughters, which she might doe, both for her ancientnesse in yeeres, and also for that she was their mother by marriage. This is a terme of love, which here shee doth expresse, to shew that her exhortation came not for want of love, but even in love she did it, as before is noted,<sup>195</sup> and as appeareth plainly in the last words of the verse 13. And herein is a point of Godly discretion, which is, that *in giving counsell to or fro, it is good so to speake, as may declare love*

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<sup>193</sup> 'essay': 'A trial, testing, proof; experiment' (OEDO).

<sup>194</sup> See pp. 43-6.

<sup>195</sup> See pp. 44, 45.

*and respect to the parties*, as shee doth here: *Abigail to David*,<sup>196</sup> *Jethro to Moses*,<sup>197</sup> yea and *Lot* to the very abominable Sodomites:<sup>198</sup> because the manifesting of love in advising, exhorting, admonishing, or reproving, doth make way in the heart of the party advised and reproved; and the contrary shuts up mens hearts and eares, as experience doth shew. And therefore in such cases let us shew love, by using good and loving termes, by protesting our true affection, if so neede require, by giving good reasons thereof, that may fully shew it, and by be- [p. 61] ing ready to doe them good, offering them to doe it, if there shall be occasion of it. Note more, that *it was a custome among the Jewes, for parents and children to speake most commonly one to another in the neerest and dearest termes of love*, by the name of father, mother, sonne, daughter, and not by calling them onely by their names, as parents doe children now. See this in Gen. 22.7 and 27.1 and 48.19 and in many other places, which argued meekenesse of spirit, intyre affection, and a loving naturall kindnesse, worthy imitation.

*Why will you goe with mee?*<sup>199</sup> This question is propounded to draw them to a consideration of some reasons within themselves, why they should resolve to goe with her; as if shee had said, I love you, as a mother her daughters, therefore I advise you to consider seriously of your resolution aforehand, and weigh with your selves, what may so lead you; for I can see no reason in worldly respects (for such onely shee urged both heere and in the verses following) why you should go with mee. And by this, as she taught them, so we may learne, that *it is a point of wisdom to aske our selves, Why we will doe this or that thing, before wee undertake it, or*

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<sup>196</sup> See 1 Sam. 25.23-4.

<sup>197</sup> See Exod. 18.17-23.

<sup>198</sup> See Gen. 19.7

<sup>199</sup> The square bracket is omitted in the 1628 edition.

*resolve upon it?* And hereunto our Saviour advised, Luke 14.28, for that is well begun, which is laid upon good grounds and sound reasons; it is a wise proceeding, it will prevent the after *Had I wist*, and future repentance. Let us therefore learne this wisdom, and not bee foolishly rash in our attempts.

[p. 62] *Are there yet any sonnes in my wombe, that they may be your husbands?*] *Naomi* now beginneth to bring in her reasons, why shee would have them to returne, all drawne from the world: in which respect, shee giveth them no comfort to follow her; and it is<sup>200</sup> as if she had said, If you will goe with mee for any worldly respect, alas, I cannot pleasure you, I am old, I have no sonnes to marry you againe unto; and as for an outward estate, you see me very poore. In thus speaking plainely, and dissuading onely by worldly reasons to try them, we may learne,

I. That *the true honest-hearted, and such as feare God, in the kind offers of their friends, deale truly with them, and will not lead them into vaine hopes.* Thus *Naomi* dealeth; thus did our Saviour, Matt. 8.20, for they would not deceive them. Wee must labour for this plaine dealing; and not onely looke to our selves, and what present benefit wee may get to our selves, as most doe in these deceitfull times, which is contrary to our Christianity, 1 Thess. 4.6, to true love, 1 Cor. 13, and to the comfort of our owne consciences. Men now a daies gladly make gaine of all proffers of love, without any respect to their friends; because men are false-hearted, and like such as *David* was troubled with, Ps. 41.6.

II. That *worldly respects are not the motives which should induce any to joyne themselves with Gods people;* for they want these things often. Of this our Saviour telleth the Lawyer, Luke 9.57.<sup>201</sup> The Godly heere have their least share in the things

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<sup>200</sup> In the present edition a comma has been omitted at this point.

<sup>201</sup> The correct reference is Luke 9.58.

[p. 63] of this life, because they have a better portion provided for them in the life to come. Wee are not then to become professors of Religion with others for these worldly things. *Naomi* telleth thee, this is not a good reason. Christ telleth thee hee is poore, and such as follow him, must take up their crosse; must suffer affliction, saith *Paul*, 2 Tim. 3.12, for to the godly it is given to suffer for him, Phil. 2.29.<sup>202</sup> Beware of a *Judas* minde, to come for the bagge; or a *Demas*-like disposition, to come before thou hast shaken off the love of the world.<sup>203</sup> for if thou doest not, thou wilt sell Christ for the world, and bid the Gospell adieu for goods.

Question. *Why is it said that shee had no sonnes moe for them to marry? why should shee thus speake to them?* We must know that it was a Law among the Jewes, that a brother should raise up seede to a brother, who left a wife, and dyed childlesse, Deut. 25.5; Gen. 38.8, 11.<sup>204</sup> To which Law and practice her speech alludeth. And by this wee may thinke it very likely, that these women were taught in the Law of God, and made acquainted with the practice of Gods people. This is very probable, because *Naomi* was so godly a Matrone; and it appeareth by *Ruths* vertues: which being so, it commendeth the care of *Naomi* and her sonnes, for the soules of these young women, borne of Idolaters out of the Church, to teach them the Law of the true God. A good example for parents to follow, and for husbands; for fathers and mothers see<sup>205</sup> Prov. 4.3-4; Deut. 6.7; [p. 64] Eph. 6.4; Deut. 11.19; Prov. 31.1; 2 Tim. 1.5 and 3.15, and for husbands read 1 Cor. 14.35. But alas, many are so ignorant, as they cannot teach them, and many so carelesse, as they neglect them, many so wretched, as they will not, and some so prophane, as they mocke at it, and

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<sup>202</sup> The correct reference is Phil. 1.29.

<sup>203</sup> See 2 Tim. 4.10.

<sup>204</sup> This was the levirate law, which figures in chapters 3 and 4 of *Ruth*.

<sup>205</sup> In the present edition, the semicolon followed by a capital 'S' in the 1628 edition is omitted at this point.

hold it no duety for them, but for the Priest (as in scorne they call the Minister of Christ)<sup>206</sup> to performe.

Verse 12. *Turne againe, my daughters, goe your way, for I am too old to have an husband: if I should say, I have hope, if I should have an husband also to night, and should also beare sonnes:*

*Naomies* third motion to have them to returne, using still the same exhortation, with the like kind tearmes of love, and adding another reason to move them to returne.

*Turne againe, my daughters, goe your way.*] *Naomi* ceaseth not to urge them still, to try them to the utmost, not in want of zeale to gaine them to God, but in a godly jealousie fearing their constancie, if they should goe on with her; of this before at large,<sup>207</sup> and therefore here I omit the instructions.

*For I am too old to have an husband.*] This reason is a preventing of an objection to her former reason: for they might say, Though, mother, you be not with child now, yet you may marry and have children; to this *Naomi* answereth, that shee is too old to have an husband. From this we learne, [p. 65] that *there is a time when women are too old to marry*, by the opinion of godly *Naomi*. Now if any aske when that is? I answer, as I suppose, when a woman is above sixtie yeeres of age; and therefore Saint *Paul* alloweth such a one for a widow, but not under, giving leave to others to marry.<sup>208</sup> for under sixtie women have had children, but none above, but

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<sup>206</sup> The word ‘priest’ was associated with Roman Catholicism. Here, Bernard indicates that certain people mocked Anglican clergy as being no better than Roman Catholic priests.

<sup>207</sup> See pp. 43, 45-6, 59-60, 61, 62.

<sup>208</sup> See 1 Tim. 5.9, 14.

*Sarahs* extraordinary blessing. And it is fit for women after sixtie, to follow the praise of blessed *Annah*, Luke 1.37.<sup>209</sup> We read not in the Scripture of the marriage of such: and if they be poore<sup>210</sup> among us, and doe marry, we dislike it, and speake against it: if they alledge the ends of marriage, they are easily answered: For the first is for procreation of children, which in them is past; the other is to avoid fornication, which they should be farre from; seeing the body is dead, the heart should not grow ranke with filthy lust: the lecherous old person is hated of God. If they alledge to marry for mutuall comfort: I aske, With whom will shee marry for such comfort? If with a yong man, shee may perhaps comfort her selfe in him, but not he himselfe with her: for yong men marry old womens goods and lands, but not their persons; there is in nature no accord between them, her wanton heart may seeke her pleasure in matching with him, but he will take no contentment in her, but for what shee hath. If with an old man: where is comfort, when two froward old persons meet together? old age, all know, is hard to please, and therefore old persons can hardly afford kind comforts one to another.<sup>211</sup> [p. 66] Lastly, marriage bringeth cares and troubles, 1 Cor. 7,<sup>212</sup> saith Saint *Paul*. Now it is time for old women to lay aside the cares of this world, and to give themselves to fasting and prayer, and to doe good workes, and so to shew their care for the world to come. And therefore let such widowes continue widowes, and betake themselves to God and his divine worship, as best befitteth them.

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<sup>209</sup> The correct reference is Luke 2.37.

<sup>210</sup> Many widows would have been poor, and remarriage was a way of improving their condition. Bernard elsewhere is critical of widows being courted for their riches (see p. 359). He would have been more critical if they were old.

<sup>211</sup> Bernard here notes the deficiency of both old women and old men as marriage partners. In doing so, he avoids the misogyny of Joseph Swetnam, who focuses in his *Araignment* on the negative consequences of marrying froward widows (Swetnam 59-64).

<sup>212</sup> Specifically, verses 28, 33 and 34.



*If I should say, I have hope:]* to wit, to have children, and so might take an husband; implying thus much, that *while a woman hath hope of children, shee may marry*; for the first and chiefest end of marriage such a one is not deprived of: And therefore let child-bearing women use their libertie and marry, if they cannot abstaine, 1 Cor. 7,<sup>213</sup> 1 Tim. 5.28,<sup>214</sup> yea though they be poore, neither may any be offended thereat.

*If I should have an husband also to night.]* This circumstance of time is noted, that these women had gone nigh one dayes journey with *Naomi* at the least. So they shewed herein great kindnesse to travell so farre with her, or that it was farre on the day before they came forth, if this was the first night: or else shee speaketh thus, for that marriage was consummated at night. Here some may aske,<sup>215</sup> why needed *Naomi* thus to speake of her having an husband and bearing of children, seeing shee knew that the next kinsman was to doe the office for the dead? Chapter 3.1, 2. Shee might have said, Your husbands have kinsmen, which by our Law are to marry you, if you will goe with me, though I have no sonnes my selfe. *Naomi* knew [p. 67] this well enough, as it appeareth afterwards, but first shee will not draw them to the Lords people with such carnall reasons; againe, shee knew not, perhaps, now, whether such were dead or alive; if alive, yet they might be marryed, and so could not take them for wives: if unmarried, shee yet knew not whether they would submit to the Law in that case. For we see that what God commanded, was not ever obeyed, and the Story telleth us that one kinsman, Chapter 4, refused her; and why not another? And therefore, because shee could not speake any thing of certainty on which they might depend, shee mentioneth no such thing: shewing this, that *the wise will not make*

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<sup>213</sup> Specifically, verses 9 and 39.

<sup>214</sup> 1 Tim. 5 only has 25 verses. The correct reference is probably 1 Tim. 5.11, 14.

<sup>215</sup> Here, again, Bernard is concerned to anticipate an objection.

*promises rashly for others, nor perswade to more then they well know*, lest they be deceived, and so also deceive others relying upon their word. This reproveth all rash undertakers for others, though reason and Religion should bind those, for whom they so undertake, to performe the same.

*And should also beare sonnes.*] *Naomi* speaketh first of having a husband, and then of bearing children; for *childbirth is to be the fruit of lawfull marriage onely*. God first joyned man and woman, and made them man and wife, and then said, Increase and multiply. *Naomi* was not of that mind to make her selfe a mother out of marriage, as many wantons and Light-skirts doe; making themselves whores, and their children bastards, and all for satisfying the rage of present lust, though after they repent with griefe and shame.<sup>216</sup>

[p. 68] Verse 13. *Would yee tarry for them, till they were growne? would yee stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters: for it grieveth me much for your sakes, that the hand of the Lord is gone out against me.*

*Naomi* here disswadeth them from staying for husbands by her, if it were granted that now shee had borne sonnes; and having thus spoken, shee breaketh forth into a sorrowfull complaint of her inabilityie to doe them good, for their sakes. The disswasion is set out by a double interrogation, for more vehemencie of speech, and by an answer made thereto. In the complaint shee sheweth her griefe, and that for whose sake chiefly, and how it came upon her.

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<sup>216</sup> Bernard's criticism here is evidence of the double standard, to which Ester Sowernam draws attention in the Swetnam debate, regarding blame of the woman rather than her partner for having an illegitimate offspring. See the Introduction section 5.

*Would yee tarry for them, till they were growne?]*<sup>217</sup> As if shee had said, If I had now yong sonnes, you could not marry them till they were of sufficient yeeres, they must be growne up to marriage before they doe marry: *Marriage is for them that are growne up for it, and are marriageable.* God, when he made our first parents, made them of yeeres fit for procreation of children before he married them. And this is to be observed for the due accomplishment of marriage, and for reverence to Gods ordinance; which checketh those parents, who for other ends then the ends of marriage, doe match their children together before they be marriageable. Here parents abuse marriage; for this is no conjunction for procrea- [p. 69] tion of children, nor to avoid fornication: these parents take away their childrens liberty, which is to marry, or not to marry when they come to yeeres of discretion: they are cruell and mercilesse parents, who bind their children in an unseparable knot and indissoluble bond, before they understand what they doe: such matches are commonly cursed of God, one forsaking another when they come to yeeres, or hating one another, living in the gall of bitternesse all their dayes, and so parents expectation is frustrate, and children undone, with sorrow to friends on all sides. A just punishment of God, and reward of their sinne.<sup>218</sup>

*Would yee stay for them from having husbands?]* As if she had said, You are yong women, and there are men now fit husbands for you, it is not meet you should therefore stay so long for little children, and so be unfitly matched with them so yong, and you so old. *It is not good for such as intend to marry, to deferre off too*

<sup>217</sup> The square bracket is omitted in the 1628 edition.

<sup>218</sup> An example of a corrective use of doctrine: see Bernard's *The Faithfull Shepheard* 67-9. Bernard shows his willingness to address a practice most associated with those of higher social status. The implication that parental authority could be questioned has a precedent in Topsell. Topsell notes from the Deut. 25.8-10 that it is lawful for children to appeal to magistrates if their parents force them in connection with marriage (*Topsell* 221-3).

*long.* This is it which *Naomi* here teacheth her daughters, and this counsell is good, if the parties cannot abstaine, and that fit matches be offered; let them yeld to the good hand of Gods providence, and not refuse an honest offer, either of pride, or of foolish fantasie, or of some nicety, or other light and idle womanish reason, against good reason and sound perswasion of godly and wise friends.

*Nay, my daughters.]* This answer sheweth *Naomi* her meaning in the former interrogations, that she could not approve of their deferring off [p. 70] to marry, but that being yong, they should not refuse to marry againe, when God should send them fit husbands. *A godly and wise mother in law*, like *Naomi*, *cannot onely be willing, but also will perswade her children in law should marry againe.* For they know, this liberty is graunted them of God, and in their owne conscience they know it reasonable, and perhaps in others of necessity. Shee was not like those mothers in law, which after the death of their owne children, cannot endure to heare of the second marriage of their children in law, whether sonnes or daughters.

*For it grieveth me much.]* Here is the reason given, why she willeth them to returne, and to take husbands againe, even for the griefe of her heart; for that seeing them as poore widdowes as her selfe, and remembring her sonnes, and how little she could doe for them, she heavily sustained the griefe, and therefore perswaded them to take husbands againe, in whom they might have comfort. Note here, how *the most godly sometime do take their afflictions very heavily*: as *Naomi* here, so *Job*, Chapter 3, *Jeremy*, Chapter 20.9, 12,<sup>219</sup> which commeth through weakenesse of faith, want of patience, want of humility, through also the strength of corruption and the aggravating of the affliction, ever looking upon it, but not weighing the will of God,

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<sup>219</sup> The correct reference may be Jer. 20.14-18: 'Cursed *be* the day wherein I was born' etc.

the necessity of the crosse, and the good which might come thereby. Well, yet if the best may be much cast downe, then let not such as be free, not under the crosse, not knowing how they can beare it, censure o- [p. 71] thers for their weakenesse under the burthen: but rather take notice thereof, and be a staffe of comfort unto them, helpe to beare the burthen with them, and pray for their patience.

*For your sakes.] Afflictions are the more grievous for friends wrapped therein, so as one cannot well helpe another. Naomi* was greatly afflicted, but the more (shee saith) for her daughters miserie with her, who losing her sonnes, made also them poore widowes. *Abimelechs*<sup>220</sup> destruction encreased  *Davids* sorrowes and troubles <Ps. 52>. *Elijah* not a little grieved for the widowes sorrow with whom he sojourned <1 Kings 17.20-1>: and so was *Luther* for the Duke of Saxonie <Acts and Monuments page 773a<sup>221</sup>>: and the reason hereof is true love, which taketh to heart a friends affliction in their owne troubles, as *David* did *Abiathars*, 1 Sam. 22.22. This grace of true friendship is much to be wished: for men now a dayes care not much for their friends miserie, if they be in prosperity, or if in adversity with them, how they themselves may get out, though they leave their friends, as a pawne for themselves: yea such villanie is in some men, that they will purposely bring their friends into misery, to doe themselves a pleasure; coozen them, to inrich themselves; overthrow them, to set up themselves.

*That the hand of the Lord.] Thus she calleth her affliction, the hand of the Lord, because all afflictions come by the power and providence of God, as by an*

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<sup>220</sup> 'Ahimelech' is meant. See 1 Sam. 22. In Ps. 52 David speaks of the killer of Ahimelech and his family.

<sup>221</sup> The publication details of the first English edition of this work are as follows: John Foxe, Actes and monuments (London, 1563). However, Bernard's page reference does not correspond with any edition of Actes and monuments available in Edinburgh libraries or with the online variorum edition, John Foxe's Book of Martyrs. Furthermore, there does not appear to be any relevant narrative in these editions.

hand upon us, Job 1.21 and 16.12; Lam. 1.12 17;<sup>222</sup> Amos 3.6 and 4.6-7, 11,<sup>223</sup> 2 Chron. 15.6; Isa. 45.6-7. For afflictions come not out of the dust, [p. 72] neither do troubles spring out of the ground, Job 5.6. Let then all afflictions bee acknowledged to be Gods hand, not as chance with the Philistims [sic],<sup>224</sup> not of the Devill, witches, and ill instruments.<sup>225</sup> If we acknowledge them with *Job* from God, we will goe to him, humble our selves before him, pray for pardon, and deliverance by him, as who onely can deliver us: yea, this will make us patient under the crosse, this will worke some contentment, and say, It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good; This will make us quiet towards the ill instruments, as *David* was towards *Saul* and towards *Shemei*.<sup>226</sup> This will comfort us under the affliction, when we know it to be Gods hand, and that out of his fatherly mercy he will lay no more upon us, then we shall be able to beare.

*Is gone out against mee.*]<sup>227</sup> This good woman applieth the whole crosse to her selfe. The *godly in common calamities take themselves to be especially chastised*; they put not off the cause to others, but take it to themselves, as *David* did, 1 Chron. 21.17; 2 Sam. 24.27.<sup>228</sup> They thinke upon their own sinnes, and not on other mens misdeeds. This is that which humbleth them, and this is it which would humble us: which grace we must labour for.

<sup>222</sup> Verses 12-17 seem to be referred to.

<sup>223</sup> Verses 6-12 would all seem to be relevant.

<sup>224</sup> Philistines.

<sup>225</sup> This sentence draws on Bernard's *A Guide to Grand-Jury Men* (1627), where the biblical reference to the Philistines and chance is given as 1 Sam. 6.9 (1-2). In this book, Bernard goes on to declare that devils, witches and wicked men cannot do anything without the permission of God (5). In the early modern period, witchcraft was debated and there were trials of those accused of being witches (see James Sharpe, *Witchcraft in Early Modern England*).

<sup>226</sup> See 2 Sam. 19.23.

<sup>227</sup> The square bracket is omitted in the 1628 edition.

<sup>228</sup> The correct reference is 2 Sam. 24.17.

Verse 14. *And they lift up their voice and wept againe: and Orpha kissed her mother in law, but Ruth clave unto her.*

Here is the event and effect of *Naomies* speech againe; first, joyntly in both, which was a- [p. 73] gaine their passion, and then distinctly, shewed in contraries, in *Orphaes* valediction, and *Ruth* remaining still with her mother in law.

*And they lift up their voice and wept againe.*] Againe their passion of teares is recorded; both alike in passion of affection, but farre differing in the truth of the action, the best demonstration of the heart: for in both was a like shew of love in their weeping, yet not the like constant conjunction of heart towards *Naomi*; for the one forsooke her, and the other abode and went on with her. Whence we may see, that *all outward sorrow giveth not certaine witnessse of the soundnesse of the heart*; this is plaine by this example, and by *Sauls* weeping to *David*. As this is true in men, so more in women, who have teares at command.<sup>229</sup> Doe we not reade how the Israelites would weepe on one day, and be in rebellion another?<sup>230</sup> Was not *Ishmael* in his very weeping, a very deepe dissembler, the like never heard of? We are not easily therefore to be perswaded of inward hearty affection, from weeping and sheading of teares. This deceived the fourescore men which met *Ishmael*, and were most of them slain by him.<sup>231</sup> Some can shead teares at will; and all weeping doth not come from the like cause, though many weepe together, and in appearance have the same reason: there be that will weep for company, because they see others to weepe, never inwardly moved from the cause, but most from the outward passion of

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<sup>229</sup> Bernard's attribution to women of more insincerity than men is another instance of his expressing opinions disparaging of women which characterised the controversy about women. However, he does give here biblical examples of insincere weeping in men too.

<sup>230</sup> See Num. 11.

<sup>231</sup> See Jer. 41.5-7.

the parties;<sup>232</sup> yet though there be a weeping not commendable, as that which is counterfeit, that which is up- [p. 74] on every light occasion, or which is upon just cause, but in excesse: yet it is sometime a matter praise-worthy, when it is from a naturall affection, as in *Joseph* to his brethren and father; from sound love to a friend, as *Jonathans* and  *Davids* weeping; and when it is from a gracious heart, for a mans owne sinnes, as *Peters* weeping was;<sup>233</sup> or for the sinnes of others, as *Davids*, Ps. 119,<sup>234</sup> *Jeremies*, Chapter 13.<sup>235</sup> And Jesus Christ his weeping over Jerusalem, Luke 19.41. Blessed are these mourners, for they shall be comforted, these teares are put into the Lords bottle, Ps. 56.8. And such as be so doggedly hard-hearted, and want naturall affection, and sound love, so as neither for friend, nor kinsman, nor the nighest of blood, they can weepe for, are very unnaturall, and worse then brute beasts, which bleate and loow for their own kinde: so also they which can perhaps weepe for the world, for departure of friends, for losse of parents, children, husband, or wife, yet not for sin, not for Gods dishonor, not for the affliction of *Joseph*, not for want of the Word, and the taking away of the righteous;<sup>236</sup> are worldlings, are destitute of divine grace, of the true love of God and goodnesse; for men can and will mourne for such things as be ever neere and deare unto them, and which they, indeede, take to heart.

*And Orpha kissed her mother in law.*] As *Naomi* did by this act, in verse 9, take her farewell of *Orpha* with *Ruth*, so now, *Orpha* departing, thus taketh leave of her. She wept in love, and kissed her in token of love, and as loth to depart, yet

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<sup>232</sup> Bernard implies that Orpah was moved to weep by Ruth's showing sorrow.

<sup>233</sup> See Matt. 26.75, Mark 14.72, Luke 22.62.

<sup>234</sup> Specifically, verse 136.

<sup>235</sup> Specifically, Jer. 13.17.

<sup>236</sup> The reference to want of the Word suggests that Bernard is thinking of godly ministers in his own time.



volun- [p. 75] tarily leaveth her, because shee perceived by *Naomi* her words, that she could not receive worldly contentment, if shee should goe with her. So here were signes of love onely, but not the truth of it. *It is easie to make signes of love, but not to shew the true fruits of love.* These be chargeable, the other cost nothing, therefore they are afforded very cheape: and where onely outward signes of love be, and not a hearty union, there worldly losses, or the feare of such losses, or not the hope to gaine the things of this life, will soone separate such friends, as wee see in this woman.<sup>237</sup> Note further,

I. That *worldly respects are great hinderances in the course of Godlinesse*: the world keepeth from the entertaining of the Truth, Matt. 22.5. It hindereth in the receiving of it, Matt. 13.<sup>238</sup> It pulleth men from it, which have somewhat gone forward in it, as wee may see here in *Orpha*, in *Jehu*, *Judas*, *Demas*, and *Henry* the 4, the last King of France:<sup>239</sup> and this commeth from the exceeding love of it, and our chieftest care for the body, and the things of this life. But let us take heede of this world, for such as love it, the love of God the Father is not in them <1 John 2.15>: and many for love of the world, forsaking Religion, have felt the wo thereof, and have lost that which they loved. Remember *Judas*, he had the money, but what was hee the better? it did not comfort him, neither did it continue with him, neither he

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<sup>237</sup> Bernard reinforces the point that Orpah's defection is to be attributed to her unsound love. This led to her succumbing to Naomi's worldly arguments. Naomi would not have put her off if she had not been unsound. This illustrates Bernard's concern as to whether newcomers to the Church were soundly motivated. See the Introduction section 6.1.

<sup>238</sup> Specifically, verse 22.

<sup>239</sup> Jehu, Judas and Demas are among the examples of inconstancy cited on p. 42. Henri IV of France converted from Protestantism to secure the throne: 'Paris is worth a mass'. This comment has long been attributed to Henri IV, but there is no contemporary evidence for it. However, in a satire published in 1622, allegedly reporting the gossip of pregnant women, *Les caquets de l'accouchee*, one speaker says that Henri's minister, Sully, urged him to convert: 'Sire, sire, la couronne vaut bien une messe' – 'My lord, my lord, the crown is well worth a mass.' (Fournier 173). In due course the sentiment was attached to Henri himself, and Paris substituted for the crown.

long in the world. And yet wretched Caitifes that wee be, like Gadarens, we will lose Christ, rather then our swine;<sup>240</sup> [p. 76] and with *Eve*, lose Paradise for an Apple.<sup>241</sup>

II. That *an unsound heart may for a time make a faire shew in the way to Canaan*,<sup>242</sup> *but yet turne backe at the last*, as *Orpha* doth here; and as we may see in *Jehu*, *Judas*, *Demas*, *Hymeneus*, *Alexander*, *Philetus*,<sup>243</sup> and many other in all ages, falling backe from the Truth, which they indeed did never soundly love, and yet will such make so faire an entrance. And this is by reason, first, of certaine general motions of Religion, which maketh them in generall to approve of the same; againe, the generall esteeme of the very name of Religion?<sup>244</sup> all holding this, that it is a good thing to bee religious, and that none can find fault with a man for that. Further, the working of the Word, moving the heart in some sort, to intertaine it: and lastly, the desire of praise and good esteeme with men. These will make hollow hearts to set on a while to heavenward, but shall not bee able to enter. Therefore we are not easily to entertaine men for sincere, because they have made and doe make faire shewes in Religion for a time, seeing they may be unsound, and after fall away. And this should make us to examine our owne hearts, lest secret hypocrisie lurke therein, and it breake out at the length to our shame.

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<sup>240</sup> See Matt. 8.28-34.

<sup>241</sup> Bernard's blame of Eve here is an indicator of his position in the controversy debate. For example, Swetnam also blames Eve for the Fall (1), whereas others speaking with a woman's voice, including Rachel Speght and Ester Sowernam, defend Eve (Speght 4-7; Sowernam 7-10). Aemilia Lanyer, in her poem 'Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum', claims that Eve's motive for eating the forbidden fruit was to gain knowledge, whereas Adam just thought it attractive (lines 797-801) (Clarke 251).

<sup>242</sup> 'Canaan' as a symbol of the good life – 'the promised land' – was well established in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. See William Cowper, *Good Newes from Canaan*, 1613. The full title is perhaps sufficient evidence of this usage: 'Full of heavenly comfort and consolation, for all those that are afflicted either in bodie or minde.'

<sup>243</sup> As well as the first three, also cited in the previous paragraph, the others listed here are also mentioned before, on p. 42.

<sup>244</sup> The sense suggests that this question mark should be a comma.

III. That *such as want soundnesse towards God for Religion, may yet have otherwise commendable parts in them.* For *Orpha* is commended for a kind wife, as well as *Ruth* by *Naomi*, and for a kind daughter in law, verse 8, and shee shewed good [p. 77] humanity in going on the way with her mother in law, yea a good natural affection in weeping, so at parting. What shall I speake of *Joabs* valiant and hardy spirit,<sup>245</sup> of the great wisdom of *Achitophel* in all worldly affaires,<sup>246</sup> and of morall men among the Heathen? Many, which had no part nor portion in Christ, have done worthily in the things praise-worthy among men, by a restrained nature by the power of conscience, from the law of nature, written in their hearts, and by the common gifts of the Spirit: And therefore not to judge our selves or others soundly religious, and regenerate by Gods Spirit, for our commendations in meere moral vertues, or common gifts of the Spirit; for the Heathen have surpassed many true Christian hearts herein; and many by a meere civill education, and orderly bringing up in the lawdable fashions of men, and good carriage of themselves, as men among men, attaine to great commendations in and for their courtesie, affability, discretion, and many qualities, in learning and Arts, which they affect for praise with men, for their private profit, for advancement in the world, and not that they doe good things for goodnesse sake, from the power of grace and godlinesse in their hearts, which was as yet never ingrafted in them, as appeareth by their little knowledge in the Word of God, by their demeaning of themselves like Statists,<sup>247</sup> indifferently

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<sup>245</sup> Joab was David's principal military commander. His exploits are related at length in 2 Sam. passim. Joab is favourably presented on the whole, but could be ruthless. He killed Absalom in spite of David's pleas, and also killed Abner and Amasa. David on his deathbed advised Solomon to kill him, which he did (see 1 Kings 2.5-6).

<sup>246</sup> Ahithophel (Bernard's spelling comes from the Septuagint) was a councillor of David's whose wisdom was highly valued (see 2 Sam. 16.23). He later fell into disgrace by supporting Absalom in his rebellion against David (see 2 Sam. 17.1-23).

<sup>247</sup> 'statist': 'One skilled in state affairs, one having political knowledge, power, or influence; a politician, statesman.' (OEDO).

betweene two religions,<sup>248</sup> by neglecting the examination of their wayes by the Word, but keeping company with all sorts alike, [p. 78] so farre as worldly disgrace come not thereby, by never caring for the growth of Religion in themselves, or in others, to make the least opposition for it against the common streame. By all which, and by many good things wanting in them, as a holy zeale, fervency in prayer, the love of the truth for the truths sake, and such as love it, delight in meditating of Gods Word, and conferring thereof, sorrow for the afflictions of Gods people, and joy in the overthrow of the enemies thereof, (which graces meere moralists are quite destitute of) wee may see that the life of Religion, and that heavenly light of true grace is not ingrafted in them; which is more worth than all the rest, which yet are commendable: but these ought chiefly to be our praises, and yet not leave the other undone: for the one makes a man, but the other a Christian: and these together, I meane, good carriage, and civill behaviour, Learning, Arts and other good qualities, make an excellent Christian man.

*But Ruth clave unto her.]* Though *Orpha* gave occasion for *Ruth* to fall off from *Naomi*, yet her example moved not. *A well-grounded affection is not removed by the inconstancy of others*, John 6.68, for true love is fixed upon the thing beloved, and is not tyed to any by-respects.<sup>249</sup> Their love then is to be reprov'd, who fall off for company; their affections were never well settled: but *Ruths* love was most firme, her person was as it were glewed unto *Naomi*, as the force of the Hebrew word<sup>250</sup> is, to be knit as man and wife inseparably. So the [p. 79] word is used, Gen. 2.24; Matt. 19.5. Thus should the love of Gods people bee one to another, hearty and constant.

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<sup>248</sup> Bernard refers to political figures who were concerned solely with the political advantage they could gain from religion, like Henri IV of France.

<sup>249</sup> 'by-respect': 'Regard to something other than the ostensible main object; a side aim or motive; a by-consideration.' (OEDO).

<sup>250</sup> Hebrew word: dabqah.

Verse 15. *And shee said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone backe unto her people, and unto her gods: returne thou after thy sister in law.*

This is *Naomi* her last triall of *Ruth*; and these words shew plainely, all was to trie her, because she telleth *Ruth* of *Orphaes* going backe, not onely to her people, but also to her gods, which *Naomi* a good woman could not but hate, and could not so ill respect *Ruth*, and shew so great coldnesse in Religion, and honour of the true God, as to dissuade *Ruth* from the same God of truth, to returne unto Idols.

This verse is an exhortation pretended then, but not intended, with the motive thereto propounded, which was the Apostacy of *Orpha*, shewing what shee was to *Ruth*, and whither shee returned backe.

*And she said.] Naomi* upon *Orphaes* departure, for further triall of *Ruth*, taketh her example, and propoundeth the same to her: for as she now saw *Orphaes* inconstancie for all her former resolution and teares, so shee had hereby some cause to make further triall of *Ruth*, this one time. The *falls of some may justly bring others into the tryall*, though not wholly to doubt of their constancie; as if none could be good, because some are bad: for some may fall from grace, when other [p. 80] may, through Gods mercy, continue to the end.

*Behold, thy sister in law is gone backe.]* These words shew, as soone as *Orpha* had kissed her mother in law, shee went backe, with whom, or with what company is not mentioned; of her sister in law *Ruth*, shee taketh no leave, as supposing shee would come after; for *we commonly judge others by our selves*, though wee be deceived, as *Orpha* was of *Ruth*. In *Orphaes* leaving *Naomi* upon such light reasons,

wee see, that *a feeble heart, not truly settled, with weake reasons of worldly wants, is soone drawne from a right way of well-doing.* Silly<sup>251</sup> were the reasons which *Naomi* used to put her to the prooffe: which sheweth that all her former words in verse 10 were but a flourish, and were uttered more of a suddaine passion, than out of any settled resolution: yet this was not her onely weakenesse, but shee left it to posteritie. For wee may find her followers, such as upon light motions<sup>252</sup> will soone turne from goodnesse, which shew that they are not settled truly in their affections before they begin, but lightly undertake the way towards heaven, as did *Orpha* to Canaan, and as easily give it over. A misery to be bewailed; and by a well-grounded resolution aforehand to bee prevented. Againe, in this, that *Naomi* trieth *Ruth* with this her sisters example, saying, Behold, shee is gone backe; it teacheth, that *Examples of kindred, friends and old acquaintance declining from goodnesse, are trials of others, to see whether they will abide; and indeede no small inducements to pull others after them.* *Adam* was soone drawne by *Eve*; Re- [p. 81] *hoboams* heart was easily led after the advice of his familiars;<sup>253</sup> the women of Judah by their husbands easily fell to Idolatry <Jer. 44.19>; which often is done upon foolish affection to those whom they follow, and not of judgement; sometime of feare to offend, sometime in flatterie, sometime through an ignorant perswasion that others doe well, in that they doe; especially if the example before them, be of persons of place, learning, honour, and great for outward estate: for they fondly thinke, that such cannot doe amisse. Well, seeing Examples are so forcible, let them be wel examined before they be imitated, be the persons whatsoever; for precepts and not examples are rules to live by; very excellent persons have often done amisse, and gone out of the way; and as

<sup>251</sup> 'silly': 'Weak, feeble, frail; insignificant, trifling' (OEDO).

<sup>252</sup> 'motion': 'A motive, a reason; a ground or cause of action; a provocation.' (OEDO).

<sup>253</sup> See 1 Kings 12.1-14.

for kindred and acquaintance, wee are not to love them before Religion <Luke 10.52-3<sup>254</sup> and 14.26>, which should make a division between them<sup>255</sup> and us, if they take not the right way, and make us forsake them; remembering that one day God will divide acquaintances, Matt. 24.40-1; Luke 17. 34. And if yet men will here stick to them in evill, and not willingly separate themselves, they shall then perish all together, and too late wilt thou then repent, which wast led away with their company, complaining of thy folly, and curse the time that ever thou didst know them.

*Unto her people.*] That is, to the Moabites, of whom shee was, and among whom shee was borne. Shee was going to Gods people, but shee runeth backe to Idolaters, because shee was of [p. 82] them, there borne, as I say, and acquainted with them. *It is hard to forsake our native Countrey, where we are borne and brought up.* This may we see in *Orpha*, and in the mixt company which came out of Egypt, thither would they have returned againe,<sup>256</sup> though there they had lived in bondage; and this is first from a naturall instinct in every one, even as the Heathen man witnesseth <*Ovid, liber 1, de Ponto: Nescio qua natale solum dulcedine cunctos Ducit, et immemores non sinit esse sui.*<sup>257</sup>>. Againe, there is better hope, as is supposed, in wants to be relieved among friends, kindred, and acquaintance in their owne countrey, then elsewhere in a strange place. And lastly, the very thorow-acquaintance and knowledge of the country, the people, their nature and conditions, and their owne bringing up there like unto them, is a great meanes to keepe the affection and heart towards the same. But from this in case of Religion we must

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<sup>254</sup> Luke 10 only has 42 verses, and ends with the story of Martha's impatience with her sister Mary's preoccupation with Jesus's teaching, verses 38-42. This may be the correct reference.

<sup>255</sup> A comma in the 1628 edition has been omitted at this point.

<sup>256</sup> See Exod. 16.3, Num. 14.1-4.

<sup>257</sup> Ovid, *Epistolae ex Ponto* 1.3.35-6: 'I do not know what charm draws us all to our native country, and prevents us from forgetting it.'

labour to weane our selves, and follow *Abraham*, Heb. 11.8, and religious Proselytes, *Ittai*, and *Uriah*,<sup>258</sup> with many others, yea and of later times blessed Exiles from their Native countryes for the Gospels sake,<sup>259</sup> considering that one day we must bid farewell to all the World.

*And to her gods.*] This is a check<sup>260</sup> unto *Orpha*: in which *Naomi* doth closely<sup>261</sup> shew unto *Ruth*, her sisters misery in going backe, which was, to worship Idols, and Devils, with the people of her countrey, seeing shee now had none to keepe her backe from the same. Hence note briefly,

I. That *to leave Gods people, to goe to dwell among Idolaters, is even to become an Idolater*; For the love of Idolaters will bring to the love of their Idols: [p. 83] see it in *Salomon*, and in *Jehoram Jehosaphats sonne*.<sup>262</sup> for such have dayly provocations to that, which indeed they be of their owne natures prone unto: and therefore the Lord did forbid his people to have any fellowship with the Nations,<sup>263</sup> lest they should become Idolaters. Therefore let us not come among Idolaters, if we would not be like them: we may not presume of our owne strength, nor thinke by our groundednes in Religion, to take our liberty to marry with them, to dwell with them, or long to travell among them; for we see dayly by experience, the vanity of this confidence.

II. That *what the Idolaters worship, that they take to be God, and so offer divine worship to it*. This is plaine by *Naomi* her speech, calling the Idols of the

<sup>258</sup> Ittai, a Philistine, and Uriah, a Hittite, were both loyal supporters of David.

<sup>259</sup> Bernard would have been thinking of the puritans who emigrated. For instance, Brook reports ministers and their followers leaving the kingdom for Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Leyden and elsewhere early in James I's reign (1:64).

<sup>260</sup> That is, a rebuke.

<sup>261</sup> 'closely': 'By bringing the eyes or mind into close proximity with an object or matter; with close attention or investigation.' (OEDO).

<sup>262</sup> Solomon's falling into idolatry is described in 1 Kings 11, and Jehoram's in 2 Kings 8.18.

<sup>263</sup> A general term for the gentiles. See Deut. 7.1.



Moabites, Gods; and we find that all Idolaters gave to their Idols the name of God. See this in wicked *Jeroboam*, 1 Kings 12.28, and in the Israelites, Exod. 32.8. And therefore we may here see the palpable blindness with which God striketh such, to make us avoid them, and yet bemoane them, as also to feare where such be, lest Gods wrath seaze upon us, for their so robbing the true God of his honour.

III. That *Idolaters have moe gods than one*, as these Moabites had, *Baal Peor*, Num. 25, and *Chemosh*, 1 Kings 11.<sup>264</sup> The Grecians had thousands of gods; and the Heathen Romanes not a few:<sup>265</sup> for leaving or not knowing the true God, they wander they know not whither, they have no certainty whereon to rest, they follow what they either imagine, or other doe devise, or what by o- [p. 84] thers examples are practised before them; see it in the Israelites forsaking the Lord, and in the idolatrous Papists at this day. For idolatrie is as whoredom, which maketh the Adulterer to range abroad in unsatiable lust, not content with one, no nor with many: no more doe the spirituall Adulterers rest with one false god, but are mad upon all they see, Ezek. 16.24-5, 28.<sup>266</sup> O therefore let us prayse our God, who hath opened our eyes to see and know him, and hath delivered us from this miserable slavery of Idolaters, who serve so many! they must needs be in great feare: for they be as servants serving many masters, all tyrants and all of severall qualities; how should they then ever rest in peace? Note before I conclude, how these Moabites, filthy Idolaters, were the children of *Lot*, begotten in incest upon one of his owne daughters in his drunkennesse.<sup>267</sup> Whence we may see, that *the ill begotten children of the godly are*

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<sup>264</sup> Specifically, verses 7 and 33.

<sup>265</sup> Here, Bernard reinforces biblical examples with classical practice. Many 17<sup>th</sup>-century writers combined the Christian with the classical. Bernard cites classical writers on a number of occasions in the commentary.

<sup>266</sup> It is not clear why Bernard selects these particular verses since the whole passage verses 24-34 illustrates the point he is making.

<sup>267</sup> See Gen. 19.36-7.

*rather left under the curse of their fathers sinne, then made partakers of any of their vertues*, as appeareth both in Moabites and Ammonites, and in *Abimelech* the bastard sonne of *Gideon*,<sup>268</sup> to shew the Lords hatred of all filthinesse in his people, and to strike feare into their hearts for offending this way. Let Parents note this, to take heed they be not fathers of an unlawfull issue,<sup>269</sup> if it be not for their owne sakes, yet for those they shall beget, whom they bring under a curse, for their sinne. Let bastards here learne to bewaile their birth, and labour by a new birth according to the Spirit, to wipe out the staine of their parentage ac- [p. 85] cording to the flesh.

*Turne thee after thy sister in law.*] This exhortation cannot be taken as seriously meant: for would *Naomi* perswade *Ruth* to idolatrie, and turne her from going to Gods people and the true God, to goe to the society of Idolaters and to devils? We may not possibly thinke so uncharitably of her, and the 18 verse putteth it out of controversie, where it is said, When shee saw *Ruth stedfastly minded*, she left off to speake, as having found out what shee sought for, and till then shee ceased not to make triall. For *where just suspicion of unsoundnesse is, there triall may be made to the utmost, till the doubt be removed*: For this is not to beate the parties from goodnesse, but to see their unfeigned love of goodnesse, that they being tried, may be well approved of. Let not any be offended then at such tryals; for if thou beest sound, the oftener thou art brought to the touchstone, the more purer gold thou wilt appeare to be.

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<sup>268</sup> See Judg. 8.30-1 and Judg. 9.

<sup>269</sup> Here, Bernard slips from the term 'Parents' to the term 'fathers', which he uses earlier in the passage, in connection with illegitimate children. A similar ambiguity as to whether both the man and the woman were to blame in unlawful sex or the man only occurs in Bernard's exposition of Ruth 3.14 (pp. 315-17).

Verse 16. *And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to returne from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will goe, and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God.*

*Ruths* answer unto *Naomi*: wherein is her request unto her, and a reason expressing her full resolution, partly in this verse, and partly in the next verse following.

[p. 86] *And Ruth said.*] In this answer following, *Ruth* sheweth most plainly that shee was of a very constant resolution, and not a whit moved with the scandall<sup>270</sup> of her sister in lawes departure, and leaving of her alone. For *the well settled soules are not to be removed from their resolution to good, for any lets, which Satan and his instruments may cast before them, and in their way.* The wrath of *Nebuchadnezzar* cannot make the three Children start backe;<sup>271</sup> the Plots of Princes against *Daniel* cannot make his heart to faint, neither to neglect to pray unto his God three times a day.<sup>272</sup> Neither foure hundred flatterers, nor feare of *Achabs* wrath can make *Michaiah* dissemble, nor hault in the message of the Lord.<sup>273</sup> A world of wicked ones cannot make a righteous *Noah* the worse, nor corrupt righteous *Lot* in the midst of Sodom: They may vex him, but never gaine him to their wickednesse. What can afflictions worke upon Saint *Paul*? Surely nothing: they may draw him neerer to God, but never pull such a one from God. Lastly, let back-slyders revolt; will *Orphaes* example move *Ruth*? will the falling away of some from Christ, make the

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<sup>270</sup> ‘Scandal’: ‘Discredit to religion occasioned by the conduct of a religious person; conduct, on the part of a religious person, which brings discredit on religion’ (OEDO).

<sup>271</sup> See Dan. 3.

<sup>272</sup> See Dan. 6.

<sup>273</sup> See 1 Kings 22, 2 Chron. 18.

Disciples to leave him?<sup>274</sup> No, no; they are built on the Rock, and not on the sand. Therefore we are not to feare their fall; they make God their strength, and he upholdeth them, so as none can pluck them out of his hands <John 10.27-8>.<sup>275</sup>

*Intreat me not to leave thee.*] These words may be read two wayes: first thus, *Be not against me* <Tremellius, Junius, Montanus.<sup>276</sup> So in the margent of the new Translation>: and so reading, we learne, that *they are against us*, [p. 87] *who use reasons, or doe exhort us to turne backe from well-doing*; therefore Christ called *Peter, Satan*, that is, Adversarie, one that was against him, when he gave him counsell to doe otherwise then his Father had appointed, and otherwise then according to the end he came for: and so should *Eve* have thought of the Serpents counsell; and Israel of *Jeroboams*.<sup>277</sup> for such with-hold men from pleasing God, from the comfort of conscience, which is onely gotten by well-doing, and from the hope of the blessed reward which is promised to well-doing. Let us then hold such for our Adversaries; and not thinke as the men of the world do, who hold all their kind friends which any way pleasure the body, though they be Adversaries to their soules, in hindering them in the way to life and salvation, by perswading them to pleasures unlawful, to unjust gaine, to a false religion and idolatrous worship, as Popery is: But in these things, because they be blind and see not their harme, they therefore thinke not that such be against them, when yet there be no greater Adversaries then these. The second reading is as it is translated, *Intreat me not to*

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<sup>274</sup> See John 6.68.

<sup>275</sup> Of the examples of individuals showing resolution in this paragraph, Ruth stands out as the only woman.

<sup>276</sup> Emmanuel Tremellius, Franciscus Junius and Benedictus Arias Montanus were 16<sup>th</sup>-century scholars whose translations and commentaries on the Bible were consulted by the translators of the Authorised version, 1611. Their interpretation of the Hebrew text is consigned to the margin, as deserving attention, but not the preferred reading.

<sup>277</sup> See 1 Kings 12.26-30.

*leave thee.* And thus taking the words, we learne from this godly yong woman, that *the godly have a desire not to be hindred in a good course.* *Ruth* was going from Idolaters to the Church of God, and was in love with *Naomi*, whom she would accompany thither, and would not be intreated to forsake her; no more would *Elisha* leave *Eliah*.<sup>278</sup> The godly are like to *Ahimaaz*, who would not be let for running to *David*.<sup>279</sup> for, [p. 88] indeed, they set their hearts on the Lords wayes, and have a full resolution to doe well, by Gods helpe, and doe rejoyce in the way of well-doing; and finding therein comfort, like *Abrahams* servant, will not be stayed,<sup>280</sup> but doe hasten home to their Heavenly Country. This grace let us labour for, to have a desire not to be hindred in a good course, nor to be withdrawne from good purposes, but stand fast in our honest resolutions; which if indeed we doe, then will we shew it: we will pray to God to further us, and to remove all lets that may hinder; we will check such as are against us <Matt. 16.23>; we will prevent all hinderances, and betimes avoid the occasions which might draw us backe, as did Saint *Paul* <Gal. 1.15<sup>281</sup>>; we will withstand the letts, as *Paul* also did <Acts 21.13>; and as *David* did when he had a mind to encounter *Goliah*, his brethrens contempt of himself, the Israelites feare of *Goliah*, the words of *Saul*, nor the Philistims greatnesse nor brags, could hinder him, he would follow his resolution: so should we in all good things.<sup>282</sup>

*Or to turne from following after thee.]* As if shee had said, Use no more words to hinder my honest intendement, but goe on that I may follow thee: let my sister in law goe to her people and gods too; her example moveth me not one whit, I will goe with thee to thy people and to thy God: I have tasted by thee of true Religion, the

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<sup>278</sup> See 2 Kings 2.1-11.

<sup>279</sup> See 2 Sam. 18.19-30.

<sup>280</sup> See Gen. 24.54-6.

<sup>281</sup> Probably verses 15-17 are meant.

<sup>282</sup> See 1 Sam. 17.

power whereof and thy vertues so bind me, as I can leave all, countrey, kindred, and friends, and old acquaintance, to follow thee, my mother. See here,

I. How *Religion and grace maketh such as be of [p. 89] severall nations, to love one another; to love forrainers being religious, better then friends, kindred and old acquaintance not religious.* *Ruth* is in love with *Naomi* a Jew, and esteemeth not of *Orpha* her countrey woman; for, indeed, Religion maketh a more sure conjunction, in a more blessed kindred then nature, having God for our Father, the Church for our Mother, the Saints for our Brethren, the Spirit of God for the bond of our union, which maketh us to desire to live and die together. Labour for this love, the love of the brethren, before naturall love of friends not religious; for this is a true signe of our eternall salvation, and that we be translated from death to life <1 John 3<sup>283</sup>>.

II. *A heart truely in love with the godly, will not easily be removed to forsake them, by the falling away of others;* as we may see by this example: By *Jonathans* cleaving to *David*, and the Disciples continuing with Christ, though others forsooke him <John 6<sup>284</sup>>. And this is, because their love is well grounded: for they know the godly to be in their persons honorable; how basely soever the slaves of *Satan* esteeme of them, they know them to be Kings, and Priests unto God. They discern of their graces, and are in love with them for the same, yea, they having the same Spirit, doe by the force thereof knit themselves to them: and doe know that their end is happinesse, whatsoever their present estate be in this vale of miserie <Ps. 37.37>. Let us cleave then to these, though others doe fall away; and that we may so doe, let us not take offence at their weakenesses and frailties, but consider of their [p. 90]

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<sup>283</sup> Specifically, verse 14.

<sup>284</sup> Specifically, verses 66-9.

love with God, of their excellent graces, and how that holy Spirit of God dwelleth in them, that they be such as be Coheires with Christ, and shall reigne with him in glory.

*For whither thou goest, I will goe, and where thou lodgest, I will lodge.*] This is the reason of *Ruths* request to *Naomi* from her resolution, which is, not to forsake her company, but to goe with her, and to lodge with her, wheresoever shee shall lodge; this is her resolution, which made her continue with *Ruth*,<sup>285</sup> and not start backe. Whence note, That *the putting on of a strong resolution, will make one withstand all oppositions and hinderances, which may lie in the way, to be lets from well-doing.* This made *Michaiah* to doe faithfully the Lords message, 2 Kings 22.<sup>286</sup> This made *S. Paul* to go on to Jerusalem without daunt of Spirit, Acts 20.24 with 21.31,<sup>287</sup> for a grounded resolution is such a settling of thy heart, as it cannot easily be removed. Let us therefore put on this resolution, in making an onset to goodnesse, and in every good action, seeing there may be many hinderances in the way: and to doe this, that our hearts start not backe, wee must make our resolution strong by these things; wee must see that the thing wee take in hand, be good and lawfull; then, whether lawfull to us, and what calling we have thereto: thirdly, to weigh the circumstances of time and place, so that it may bee done seasonably and fitly. This is prudence, which will much commend the deede. Fourthly, note with our selves the end, Gods glory, publike good, discharge of our duety, and be- [p. 91] ware of sinister respects. Lastly, forecast all rubbes<sup>288</sup> which may happen in the way; for such foresight fore-warneth, and hee which is fore-warned, is halfe armed, and

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<sup>285</sup> *Naomi* is meant.

<sup>286</sup> The correct reference is 1 Kings 22.

<sup>287</sup> This reference can be more fully given as Acts 20.22-24 with 21.27-31.

<sup>288</sup> 'rub': 'An obstacle, impediment, hindrance, or difficulty, of a non-material nature: a. With addition of *in* (or *on*) *one's way, course*, etc.' (OEDO).

will not repent with an Had I wist; neither will be moved with such lets, Acts 20.24. Note againe from hence, that *Ruth* excepteth not against any condition which may befall *Naomi*; but will goe with her, and take such part as shee taketh, whether the lodging be good or bad; whether the place be comfortable, or otherwise, whither *Naomi* shall goe. Which example telleth us, that *such as truly love the godly, both can and will give themselves to them, to accompany them in every estate*, not onely in prosperity, but in adversitie, as did *Moses*, because they know that God is with them, Zech 8.23, they account themselves one, and are of one heart, and having given themselves to the Lord, they cannot but give themselves to his people, 2 Cor. 8.5. And therefore if wee doe love the godly, keepe them company, and forsake them not in their adversity.<sup>289</sup>

*Thy people shall bee my people.*] Shee loveth a good woman, her mother in law *Naomi*; and thereby giveth her selfe to the love of all Gods people: for *they that love one godly person for godlinesse sake, cannot but affect all the Lords flocke*: for there is the like reason to all, as to one in that respect: and the same Spirit that uniteth the heart of one godly person to another, uniteth the same to all the rest, as being together members of Christs mysticall body. This may trie our true love to every godly person, by our true love up- [p. 92] on the some ground to all the rest: for else that particular love will not be found to be other then sinister.<sup>290</sup>  *Davids* delight was not in one Saint, but in the *Saints*, that dwell upon the earth. True it is, that by a private familiarity, and particular acquaintance with one more than another, the love may more shew it selfe, as in reason it must and will: yet such a love upon occasion will truly shew it selfe to all others, which are united in the profession of the same

<sup>289</sup> Although Bernard refers to the godly in general, he may have particularly had in mind the persecution of godly ministers by the authorities.

<sup>290</sup> 'sinister': 'Erring; erroneous; astray *from* the right path.' (OEDO).



truth, and will be ready to doe them good when such are knowne, as it ever doth wish you well, before there be any acquaintance at all. And if one godly person by a vertuous life may not onely procure love to him or her selfe, but also to all other of Gods people, this should make us so to demeane our selves every one of us, as wee may so winne others to us, as also the same persons unto the rest which feare God, for the encrease of Gods Kingdome, and so the hastening of Christs appearing.<sup>291</sup>

*And thy God, my God.]* As shee leaveth her owne people being Idolaters, for Gods people, so shee renounceth her Idols for the true God: for *they which truly for godlinesse sake embrace Gods people, cannot but then intertaine the true God, and leave their Idols*, 1 Thess. 1.6, 9. As *Ruth* did here, and *Rahab* also:<sup>292</sup> because the love of godlinesse in men, ariseth from the love of God himselfe, the Author of that goodnesse in his people. The Corinthians gave first themselves to the Lord, then to his Servants <2 Cor. 8.5>: and *Zacharie* foretelleth that the Heathen having heard of the Lord to be [p. 93] among the Jewes, they will then come and desire to be with them <Zech. 8.23>. Trie our love to the godly by a sound intertainment of their Religion, else the love is but carnall, worldly, or counterfeit; for in differing religions, there neither is nor can be any true concord <2 Cor. 6.14<sup>293</sup>>: and therefore let us not thinke that either Idolaters, Atheists, or irreligious persons can be any faithfull lovers of the truth. Note againe, that *godly persons may by their godlines draw others unto the embracing of the true God*; either by instruction, or by a holy conversation, or rather both together <Matt. 5.16; 1 Pet. 3.1 and 2.11<sup>294</sup>>; And

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<sup>291</sup> Bernard draws attention to the importance of converting outsiders so as to expand the godly community. Elsewhere, he expresses the concern, found also in Lavater and Topsell, that newcomers to the Church should be tried before they are trusted (see the Introduction section 6.1).

<sup>292</sup> See Josh. 2.9-11.

<sup>293</sup> Verses 14-18 are referred to.

<sup>294</sup> The correct reference is 1 Pet. 2.12.

therefore let us labour by our godlinesse in doctrine and life, so to set forth the Lords praises, as wee may gaine others unto him. This is our duty, Matt. 5.16, this is Christian-like carriage, which becommeth well the Saints; this will winne soules to God, and so cover the multitude of sinnes, bee an advancement to the Lords name, and bring comfort to our owne soules in the Day of Jesus Christ. It may be, some will aske, Whether for meere love to the person of any, if one intertaine Religion, he may be justified in so doing? Surely no: One may occasion another, or be a motive thereto, and so performe a good office on his part; but Religion is to bee beloved and imbraced for it selfe, and not for mans sake; the person on whom a man relieth, may die, or turne backe from the truth, and become such a ground as the sand, on which an house being built, soone decayeth, and the fall thereof is great.<sup>295</sup>

[p. 94] Verse 17. *Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried; the Lord doe so to me and more also, if ought but death part thee and mee.*

Ruth continueth her speech to *Naomi*, touching her resolution, which shee had begunne to shew in the former verse; and in this confirmeth it with an oath, so that *Naomi* neede not to doubt of her constancie.

*Where thou diest.*] *Ruth* speaketh of her mothers death, and also of her owne. *It is a principle in nature, to know and to be perswaded that all shall die*, Job 21.33; Heb. 9.27; 1 Kings 2.1; Josh. 23.14; 1 Cor. 15.51; Eccles. 7.2 and 6.6, for death goeth over all, in as much as all have sinned, Rom. 5.<sup>296</sup> Then let all prepare to die, at one time, or at another: which stands in seeking reconciliation with God in Christ,

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<sup>295</sup> Again, Bernard follows the procedure set out in Faithfull Shepheard for preventing objections (77-9).

<sup>296</sup> Specifically, verse 12.

and in endeavouring to keepe a good conscience before God and man, Acts 24.16, waiting the time of dissolution, which the men of pleasures, as *Dives*;<sup>297</sup> the worldly-minded, as the rich man; the drowsie protestant, like the five foolish Virgins,<sup>298</sup> and such as go on securely, as those in the old world, and in Sodom, Matt. 24.37-9, doe not. All know they must die, yet most neglect to prepare to die, and to provide for themselves a better habitation: which men on earth will doe, when they know they must out of their dwellings; they will not be to seeke to the very day, in which they know they shalbe put out.<sup>299</sup>

*I will die.*] I meane to end my daies with thee, my mother, I will not returne againe into my [p. 95] Countrey, but will make my end, in what place soever thou shalt die. *The true love of the godly one towards another, is a continuing and enduring love to death.* So was the love of these two, and the love of *Jonathan* and *David* <2 Sam. 1.26>, because their love is not grounded upon temporarie and meere worldly respects, as the love of others bee; nor upon meere nature, as that of parents and Children; but upon such reasons, as the alteration of outward estate here cannot disanull, or make void. They love one another for their graces in heavenly respects, and therefore by a spirituall bond they are united in heart, and made one. Thus should wee love, and thus settle it, that it may abide to death: and that wee may so love, let us remember, that we be Children of one Father, wee be brethren, wee be very members of the same body, and Christ Jesus our Head, wee also are here strangers; and if wee love not one another, who will love us? for the world hateth us <John 15.19>, There be which would be held Christians, and yet cannot love such as

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<sup>297</sup> See Luke 16.19-31. In the Vulgate, the rich man is dives.

<sup>298</sup> See Matt. 25.1-13.

<sup>299</sup> Bernard again illustrates the preoccupation of his society with preparing for death (see earlier, pp. 21-2); see also Nancy Lee Beaty, The Craft of Dying. A Study in the Literary Tradition of the Ars Moriendi in England (1970).

be so indeede. *Cain* cannot love *Abel*, though his brother; nor *Esau* a *Jacob*. Some professe to love the godly, but it is sinisterly,<sup>300</sup> not simply for their graces and vertues, as *Ruth* here loved *Naomi*, for no other cause of love could there be; for *Ruth* was young, and *Naomi* old, and very poore. What power in nature, and worldly reason could then leade *Ruth* thus to love *Naomi*? Other some love them for their vertues, but their vertues must be such, as must make their persons without exception, every way plea- [p. 96] sing to them, else they will fall off from their love; they cannot, forsooth, beare with infirmities, all must be in perfection. But such doe not looke into themselves with a single eye, or else with too much selfe-love behold themselves: for otherwise they would love a godly Christian, as such a one, though accompanied with some infirmities, from which in this life none can bee wholly freed.

*And there will I be buried.] Ruth* spoke before of their death, and now of their buriall together: so as neither in life nor death, shee would bee separated from her mother. By this it appeareth,

I. That *buriall was a duty performed to the dead then, as now*, and therefore shee speaketh of it, as hoping that it would be performed to them, as men alwaies have done one for another successively. *Abraham* for *Sarah*; *Isaac* and *Ismael* for *Abraham* their father: so *Esau* and *Jacob* for *Isaac*. Yea wee reade how God himselfe buryed *Moses*:<sup>301</sup> and with what solemnities burials were performed, wee may see by the embalming of *Jacob*, and his carrying into Canaan with such troupes, and the mourning there made for him divers daies.<sup>302</sup> The godly would not neglect

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<sup>300</sup> 'sinisterly': 'In a wrongful or wicked manner.' (OEDO).

<sup>301</sup> See Deut. 34.6.

<sup>302</sup> See Gen. 50.1-13.

this to *John Baptist* beheaded, to Christ crucified, and to *Steven* stoned.<sup>303</sup> It is humanity, it is an honest and good respect unto the dead, and done by beleivers also in the hope of the resurrection. It was esteemed a mercy to be buried, and the contrary was threatned as a punishment, as wee may see in 1 Kings 13.14;<sup>304</sup> [p. 97] 2 Kings 9.22<sup>305</sup> and 22.20; Deut. 28.26; Jer. 18.<sup>306</sup> Yet we must know, that a *Dives* may be buried with pompe, and yet go to hel; and a poore *Lazarus* be exalted to heaven; yea many Saints and Martyrs drowned, torne of beasts, and burnt to ashes, yet received the crowne of glory: which I speake to shew, that although the godly should want buriall, yet that hindereth not their happinesse.

II. We may see hence, that *the godly and loving friends have an affection to bee buried together*. *Jacob* would lye where *Abraham* was buried:<sup>307</sup> and the old Prophet would have his bones laid by the other Prophet <2 Sam. 19.37; 1 Kings 13.31>. And it was in former times an honour, to bee buried in the Sepulchre of their fathers: And therefore the loving affection of such is not to be blamed as altogether idle and foolish, which desire to be buried by their beloved friends, especially if they were godly and vertuous.

*The Lord doe so to me, and more also.*]<sup>308</sup> When *Ruth* saw *Naomi* so earnest to have her to returne backe, as shee thought; for her better satisfaction and

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<sup>303</sup> See Acts 8.2.

<sup>304</sup> The correct reference is 1 Kings 13.22.

<sup>305</sup> Verses 36-7 may be meant.

<sup>306</sup> The correct reference is Jer. 19.11.

<sup>307</sup> See Gen.49.29-31.

<sup>308</sup> Bernard's discussion of swearing, developed below, is further elaborated in his exposition of verse 18, '*That shee was stedfastly minded to goe with her*', pp. 102-4, and in his comment on Boaz's oath in Chapter 3 (312-4). Bernard's emphasis on this subject reflects that of the earlier commentators, who discuss it in connection with the oaths of Ruth and Boaz (Lavater 41r-42r and 105v and Topsell 67-71 and 190). The issue was important because of the Anabaptist denial of the lawfulness of oaths under the Christian dispensation (see the Introduction section 3). The importance of oaths at the time of the *Ruth* commentaries is illustrated by Thomas Fuller's condemnation of breaking faith in his *The History of the Holy War* (1639). Fuller describes a league confirmed by oath as 'the strongest bond of conscience, the end of particular strife, the soldier of public peace, the sole assurance of amity betwixt

assurance, shee thus breaketh forth into this speech, ascertaining her, that her words came from a true affection<sup>309</sup> and constant resolution of her heart.<sup>310</sup> This is a forme of an oath among the Hebrewes: for so it is said, that *Salomon* swore, 1 Kings 2.23. And thus swore *Saul*, 1 Sam. 14.44, *Jonathan*, 1 Sam. 20.13, and *Abner*, 2 Sam. 3.9, and *David*, 2. Sam. 19.13, but it is not a bare oath, but an execration withall, 1 Sam. 3.17.<sup>311</sup> Yet is not the curse particularly named, but left unto God. Hence we learne,

I. That *it is lawfull to take an oath*,<sup>312</sup> Heb. 6.13;<sup>313</sup> [p. 98] Rev. 10.6, it is warranted, Deut. 6,<sup>314</sup> and a part of Gods worship which he will give to none other: it is necessary sometime to decide a controversie, as Exod. 22.11, and to give satisfaction and assurance to the mind of others, in great and necessary matters which otherwise would not bee credited, as here; Therefore the Anabaptists erre, which hold it altogether unlawfull:<sup>315</sup> for it is lawfull to sweare, being thereto called before a Magistrate; so *Abraham* made his servant to sweare, Gen. 24,<sup>316</sup> and *Asa* made his subjects to take an oath, 2 Chron. 15,<sup>317</sup> so *Ezra*, Chapter 10, and *Nehemiah*, Chapter 13.<sup>318</sup> It is lawfull to sweare for confirmation of a truth in weightie matters one to

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divers nations, made here below, but enrolled in his high court whose glorious name doth sign it' (*History of the Holy War* 262).

<sup>309</sup> I have deleted the ensuing 'a' as it is evidently a misprint.

<sup>310</sup> Topsell, in his commentary, also draws attention to Ruth's resolution here. (67).

<sup>311</sup> Ruth stands out as the only woman among these instances of individuals who swore. Her resolution thus appears to be manly. Such a consideration may have occurred to Lavater, for he mentions, although dismisses, the interpretation that Ruth was not swearing but speaking conditionally. Here and later in his discussion of swearing, Bernard gives many biblical references mentioning swearing, whereas Lavater (41v) only observes that there are instances of swearing in scripture, and Topsell (68) only illustrates this point with David swearing in connection with Nabal (1 Sam. 25.22). This illustrates Bernard's exhaustive use of the Bible in supporting his interpretation.

<sup>312</sup> By making this point first and dwelling on it, Bernard emphasises more than Topsell in particular that oaths are legitimate.

<sup>313</sup> This verse in Hebrews alludes to Gen. 22.16-18.

<sup>314</sup> Specifically, verses 13, 18 and 23.

<sup>315</sup> Bernard here follows Lavater, who comments that saints' using oaths in weighty matters 'is to be noted against them, which doe altogether reject an othe' (105v).

<sup>316</sup> Specifically, verses 2-4, 9 and 37-8.

<sup>317</sup> Specifically, verses 12-15.

<sup>318</sup> Specifically, verse 25.

another, as the spies swore to *Rahab*,<sup>319</sup> *David* and *Jonathan*, one to another;<sup>320</sup> *David* to *Bethsheba*,<sup>321</sup> *Ruth* here to *Naomi*: and Saint *Paul* did often call God to witnesse for the glory of God, and the furtherance of the Gospell. We may therefore lawfully take an oath, so it be *in truth*, not a lye, not with an equivocation, or mentall reservation to deceive; *in righteousness*, that the matter be just, and *in judgement*, knowing well the thing, and upon mature deliberation and settled perswasion of the truth. Beware of common and usuall swearing, the custome thereof maketh it worse, and proclaimeth the man to be unreformed in his heart, yea though the thing be true, which he sweareth. A man should be so honest, and his word in such esteeme, as his oath should not neede in ordinary matters; And as we must take heede of common swearing, so when we are to sweare, let it bee in [p. 99] truth, righteousness and judgement: take heede of perjury, which God wil revenge, Ezek. 5.<sup>322</sup> Yea he sweareth to revenge it, Ezek. 17.16, 19.<sup>323</sup>

II. That *the godly when they sweare, they sweare by God*.<sup>324</sup> if they doe otherwise, it is their fault. When the Angel sware, Rev. 10.6, it was by God: so was the oath of *David*, *Jonathan*, and others: we are taught by God himselfe, to sweare by himselfe, Heb. 6,<sup>325</sup> and this will give satisfaction, for that God can beare witnesse,

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<sup>319</sup> See Josh. 2.12-14.

<sup>320</sup> See 1 Sam. 20, which records the renewal of the covenant made in 1 Sam. 18.3. See also 1 Sam. 23.18.

<sup>321</sup> See 1 Kings 1.13, 17, 29-30.

<sup>322</sup> Since disobedience to God's judgments and statutes (verses 6-7) amounts to breaking the covenant between God and Israel, Bernard sees this as a species of perjury.

<sup>323</sup> In this passage, Bernard draws attention to lawful swearing and to two kinds of wrongful swearing: irreverent swearing and perjury. Lavater (41v, 105v) and Topsell (68-71, 190) also draw attention, although less comprehensively, to the characteristics of lawful swearing as opposed to wrongful swearing. Topsell complains at length about common swearing, calling for magistrates to take action against it (68-70). He observes that Ruth swore with exemplary reverence when she affirmed her attachment to Naomi (71). Bernard, in expounding Boaz's oath in chapter 3, laments that many in his time do not swear truly (313). In doing so, he develops a point about guileful swearers that he makes on p. 103, with reference to Naomi accepting Ruth, and follows Lavater (105v).

<sup>324</sup> Topsell also asserts, although without supporting his case by biblical references, the unlawfulness of swearing by anything other than the name of God (70).

<sup>325</sup> Specifically, verse 13.

and the calling of him to witnesse, worketh a credit in the party to whom another doth sweare: such is the reverence of Gods name in mens hearts. Hee can revenge perjury, and it is his will that wee should sweare onely by him, Deut. 4 and 10;<sup>326</sup> Exod. 23.<sup>327</sup> We are not therefore to sweare by false gods, as did *Jezabel* by her gods, 1 Kings 19;<sup>328</sup> Josh. 23.7; Ps. 16.4; Zeph. 1.5, nor by them that are no Gods, Jer. 5.7; Amos 8.14, nor by the creatures, Matt. 5.35-6, for such swearers take Gods honour from him, and make these things by which they sweare, Idols: they breake the Lords Commandement, and provoke Gods wrath against them. *Ruth* a new Convert, would not sweare by the Idols of her countrey: for if shee had, it would not have satisfied *Naomi*, and she had shewed, that she had not beene converted to the true God; whereas now shee declared, that shee worshipped the true God.

III. That *every oath is with an execration, either understood, or expressed*, as here in generall termes, and else-where they are conjoyned, Neh. [p. 100] 10.29, for an oath is a calling of God to witnesse in a matter so, as to blesse him, if he speake truth; or to plague him, if hee speake the contrary. This should make men take heede how they do sweare, lest they bring a curse upon themselves, as did *Zedekiah*,<sup>329</sup> and *Vladislaus*, King of Hungarie,<sup>330</sup> and *Rodolphus*, Duke of Suevia, when he rebelled against *Henry* the Emperour his Lord and master, by the instigation of Pope *Gregory* the seventh.<sup>331</sup>

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<sup>326</sup> Specifically, verse 20.

<sup>327</sup> Specifically, verse 13.

<sup>328</sup> Specifically, verse 2.

<sup>329</sup> See Jer. 38.16, 39.6-7.

<sup>330</sup> Wladislas 1<sup>st</sup> became king in 1440, when Hungary was at war with the Ottoman Empire. In 1444 the Ottomans offered peace on very favourable terms, which were accepted by the Hungarians, who swore an oath to maintain it. But the Vatican's representative, Cardinal Cesarini, advised Wladislas that an oath made to infidels was not binding, and the Hungarians immediately jettisoned the treaty and attacked the Ottoman forces. At the ensuing battle of Varna the Hungarians were defeated and Wladislas was killed. See Engel (287).

<sup>331</sup> The Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV (1050-1106) was hostile to the papacy, and Pope Gregory VII supported the election of Rudolf of Swabia as Emperor to supplant him. Rudolf was, however,



IV. That *in imprecations and formes of cursing, it is best to passe over with silence the special kind of the judgement, and not to name it, but to leave that to God, as Ruth doth here,*<sup>332</sup> and *Salomon, 1 Kings 2.23, Saul, Jonathan, Abner, Eli* <1 Sam. 14.44 and 20.3 and 3.17; 2 Sam. 3.9>, and others; and not to say, as now many will, I pray God I may never stirre; That I may be hanged; That this bread and drink may never goe thorow me; That I may be damned; That the Devill may fetch mee: and a thousand of such fearefull wishes, too boldly uttered, from a presumptuous spirit, not fearing the terrour of God, especially when wee doe consider what dreadfull examples there have beene of this kind, that even as men have wished, so hath the judgement falne out;<sup>333</sup> and therefore let us not be rash with our mouthes herein, lest the Lord make us examples of his justice.

*If ought but death part thee and mee.*] This is that which shee sealeth with an oath, even to be constant to death; and this is the praise of her action. *Many can begin well; but they hold not on to death,* as did this *Ruth*. Of constant love I have spoken before.<sup>334</sup> Note further, that though nothing else [p. 101] can, yet *death will divide friends asunder*: therefore *Ruth* doth not except against any thing but death, which cannot be avoided. This will separate *Abraham* and *Sarah*, *Jacob* and *Rachel*, *Aaron* and *Moses*, *Jonathan* and *David*, and this *Ruth* from *Naomi*, but nothing else shall: so firmly are faithfull friends united, and made one. I will not complaine here of the levitie of this age, of the inconstancie of mens hearts, and how for every trifle,

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defeated and killed at the Battle of Mersburg in 1080, 'which appeared as the judgment of God, not only on Rudolf but on the Pope as well' (Tanner et al. 142).

<sup>332</sup> Lavater notes that the penalty is not expressed in the words *Ruth* uses, but goes on to state that *Ruth*'s oath meant that its violation would eventually result in death (41v). Lavater too warns against rashly expressing the judgement in swearing (41v).

<sup>333</sup> See the booke called the Theater of Gods judgements. [B] The author of this book is Thomas Beard.

<sup>334</sup> See pp. 23, 41-2, 56-7, 59-60, 73, 75, 78-80, 88-91, 95-6, 97.

they that seemed to be one, become two of a suddaine, they will prevent death, and sever themselves before. But so much shall suffice for this verse, and the constant resolution of *Ruth*.

Verse. 18. *When shee saw that shee was stedfastly minded to goe with her, then she left off speaking unto her.*

Here is the force and effect of *Ruths* resolution upon *Naomi*, and withall the very drift of *Naomi* her speeches to *Ruth*, concerning her going backe, only for triall of her constancie; which when shee saw, shee ceased to speake thereof any more unto *Ruth*. So as here is to be noted: First, the silence of *Naomi*. Secondly, the cause thereof. This is in the first place, the other followeth in the last words of the verse.

*When she saw.]* That is, when she perceived her full resolution, then shee admitted of her fellowship, but not before; whence, and from whose wisdom we learne, That *the godly wise are warie in their admittance of others into their company, till [p. 102] they well know them.* Wee see the wisdom of *Nehemiah*, Chapter 6.2, 11-12, *Jacob*, when *Esau* offered him kindnesse,<sup>335</sup> and of *David* towards *Saul*; though he both wept, and spake him faire, hee kept off from him;<sup>336</sup> neither would our Saviour commit himselfe to all his followers, John 2.24, for mans heart is deceitfull, and a shew may bee made of that, which is not in the heart indeede: therefore should wee learne Christs counsell, to be as wise as Serpents, with a Doves innocencie,<sup>337</sup> lest like a well-meaning *Gedaliah* without suspicion of evill in others, because wee intend none evill in our selves, we perish by hypocriticall

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<sup>335</sup> See Gen. 33.8-15.

<sup>336</sup> See 1 Sam. 24.16-22.

<sup>337</sup> See Matt. 10.16.

*Ishmaels*, Jer. 41.6.<sup>338</sup> Let us in these fraudulent times, trie, know, and so approve and admit, or dislike and leave men.

*That shee was stedfastly minded to goe with her.*] This is it which held *Ruths* stedfast spirit; she was not of a light and unstable heart. But how saw *Naomi* this in her? By *Ruths* constant abyding by her promise expressing her minde, and by her solemne oath confirming the same promise. So then, *words with an oath, and actions agreeing, sufficiently may perswade us of the stedfastnesse of the heart, and the inward disposition of the minde of such as shew themse[lv]es vertuous.* And with this should wee rest satisfied, as *Naomi* doth here, as it followeth in the next words; for charity bindeth us to thinke the best of such testimonies, of promises, oathes and actions concurring. True it is, that all these may be feigned: for wicked men will promise, sweare, and in some sort doe, but yet not [p. 103] so, as they bee free from guile therein: they will promise what they truly intend not; they will sweare, to be the better credited, and lesse distrusted, even when they meane to deceive, because they feare not God; and in some things they will be doing, in such things as may rather delude, than indeede effect what they pretend, but not what they secretly intend. Such Machiavellians,<sup>339</sup> or rather matchlesse villaines there bee in the world. But I spake before of such as feare God, who are to be beleevd, when they take an oath to shew the truth of the heart, in that which they doe speake. But that we may rest satisfied with an oath, wee must observe these things in the party: first, see to his life, whether such a one feare God; then, whether hee make conscience of an oath, or be an ordinary swearer, not regarding an oath: and thirdly, what doth make him to

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<sup>338</sup> Verse 7 is also relevant.

<sup>339</sup> Machiavelli's reputation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century is comprehensively surveyed by Sydney Anglo in *Machiavelli – the First Century*. See especially pp. 325-73, 'In the Wake of Gentillet : The Evolution of the "Machiavel" Stereotype in France and England.'

sweare, whether it be hope of gaine, some comming towards him, or feare, or some suddaine passion, and not a religious ground: as these concurre, so may wee beleewe, or doubt. The words translated (*was stedfastly minded*) are in Hebrew, *Shee strengthened her selfe*,<sup>340</sup> to wit, by her oath. By which we may learne, that *an oath is the strengthening of the mind of him that sweareth to doe that which he hath sworne to doe*; if it bee lawfull, and that the oath was not rashly taken. Thus *Elisha* strengthened himselfe not to leave *Elijah* till he was taken up;<sup>341</sup> and *Michaiah* to performe faithfully his ministerie, before and unto *Ahab*, when he came thither, where he was.<sup>342</sup> And this is lawfull some- [p. 104] time in great and weighty affaires. Wherein wee may feare the fainting of our hearts, then with prayer to God to vow our obedience, and if just cause require, to witnesse by oath our resolution, as *Ruth* doth here, and the rest beforenamed. But when we have sworne lawfully, then let us looke to it, that we doe not breake it, Ps. 15;<sup>343</sup> Josh. 9.19, for God will require it at our hands, except it be like *Herods* oath; it is then better broken, and to be repented of, rather than kept.<sup>344</sup>

*Then she left speaking unto her.*] To wit, of her returning backe againe, and of willing her to goe after *Orpha* unto her owne Countrey and people; and she left off, because she saw that *Ruth* was resolved to go with her, without sinister and by-respects,<sup>345</sup> for that *Ruth* could not by such reasons as she had laid before her, be made to depart from her, being an old poore woman and stranger, albeit *Orpha* did

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<sup>340</sup> Bernard refers to the marginal note in the Authorised Version linked to the point preceding the words 'was stedfastly minded': 'Heb. *strengthened herself*.'

<sup>341</sup> See 2 Kings 2.2, 4, 6.

<sup>342</sup> See 1 Kings 22.14, 2 Chron. 18.13.

<sup>343</sup> Specifically verse 4.

<sup>344</sup> See Matt. 14.6-11, Mark 6.22-8.

<sup>345</sup> 'by-respect': 'Regard to something other than the ostensible main object; a side aim or motive; a by-consideration.' (OEDO).

leave her. So then hence note, that *there is no reason to make further triall, where an honest resolution is, or may be well discerned*: for this were folly, and also uncharitableness, to call still into question that which is out of question, and to suspect an honest mind, which fully sheweth it selfe, as far as it can for the present. Let us then learne this wisdome, so to trie before we trust, and then to trust after sound triall; for this is the end therof. Againe, where we see the mind settled to well-doing, let us not put it to further triall then neede is, lest we doe weaken the parties faith, and bring the mind into wavering, but leave him to his honest resolution, Acts 21.14; 1 Cor. 16.12.<sup>346</sup>

[p. 105] Verse 19. *So they two went untill they came to Bethlehem: and it came to passe, when they were come to Bethlehem, that all the Citie was moved about them, and they said, Is this Naomi?*

In the sixth verse they tooke their journey, and after stood parleying by the way; now they goe forward till they came to the end thereof; so as here is shewed how long they did journey, and whither, and then what was the event when they came there.

*So they two went untill they came to Bethlehem.*] When Naomi had tried her, she tooke her to her, and so shee poore woman returneth into her Countrey, left of all except this one; shee was forsaken, but not of all; one goeth with her, and they two poore women goe together, and left not off, till they did come unto Bethlehem. Whence observe,

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<sup>346</sup> Topsell precedes Bernard in pointing out the importance of not trying anyone beyond their strength (72-3, 75).

I. That *they are to bee admitted into our fellowship, whom wee find to be constant in a good course, and true lovers of goodnesse, whatsoever they were before.* *Naomi* thus admits of *Ruth* no doubt, with great comfort. Thus *Paul* alloweth of *Marke*, 2 Tim. 4.11, though before hee had refused him, Acts 15.38, and willeth others to entertaine him, Col. 4.10-11. For thus Gods Angels deale with us; they will account us their fellow servants when we turne to God, though before we were never so lewd, yea they will rejoyce over us, and will lovingly attend us: let us then admit of such, as God [p. 106] also himselfe doth accept of us.

II. That *God leaveth not his in distresse, or altogether comfortlesse.* *Naomi* went out with husband and children, and lost them: shee returneth not alone, but God sent her one to accompany her, and to comfort her. And where mans company to helpe and comfort faileth, there God will send his Angels, as with *Jacob* in his travell to Mesopotamia,<sup>347</sup> and with the three children in the Furnace;<sup>348</sup> Yea God will stand by *Paul*, when all men forsake him, 2 Tim. 4,<sup>349</sup> because hee knoweth our frailty and weakenesse, and therefore will not leave his altogether comfortlesse, that their faith should not faile: which to thinke upon, is not a small comfort unto Gods people in their affliction and troubles.

III. That *a true resolution will shew it selfe in a full execution.* Shee resolved to goe with *Naomi*, and so shee did, till shee came to Bethlehem. *Jacob* vowed, and so resolved in his returne from Mesopotamia, to build an Altar to God at Bethel, and so he did, Gen. 18,<sup>350</sup> and 35.<sup>351</sup> Yet this is so to be understood, if forcible impediments hinder not, as we may see in *Pauls* will to goe to the Thessalonians,

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<sup>347</sup> See Gen. 28.12.

<sup>348</sup> See Dan. 3.28.

<sup>349</sup> Specifically, verses 16-17.

<sup>350</sup> Possibly the correct reference is Gen. 28.22.

<sup>351</sup> Specifically, verses 3 and 7.

which yet he did not then, because *Satan* hindred him, 1 Thess. 2.18. By this may we learne to know the difference betweene solid resolutions and suddaine flashes, raw and undigested purposes, betweene true resolutions, and such as be made in shew, but in substance prove nothing so, never seene in the effects.

IV. In this their travell to Canaan, and there- [p. 107] in to Bethlehem, note three things: their *unity*, *fervencie*, and *constancie*; they went together lovingly, they ceased not to goe on, they did not linger, they tooke no by-paths, neither forgate they whither they were going, till they came unto Bethlehem in Canaan.<sup>352</sup> As these thus went to Canaan, so should we unto the spirituall Canaan, and heavenly Bethlehem: we must goe in unity, 1 Cor. 1.10, and be of one heart, Acts 1.14 and 2.1, 46 and 4.24, in a godly fervency, Rom. 12.11; Tit. 2.14; Ezek. 3.14, as *Eliah*, *Nehemiah*, the Angel of Ephesus, Rev. 2.1-2, and as our Saviour, whom the zeale of Gods house had eaten up.<sup>353</sup> And we must goe in a constant Spirit, and not be weary of well-doing, Gal. 6,<sup>354</sup> for he that continueth to the end, shall be saved.<sup>355</sup> To conclude the observations from these words, note how Bethlehem, the house of bread, yea Canaan, a land flowing with milke and hony, and no lacke in it, Deut. 7.8-9<sup>356</sup> and 11.9, 11-12 and 27.3, was made so barren, as *Naomi* was faine to goe into Moab for reliefe, and yet now is made fruitfull againe, answerable to the name. Whence see, how *the Lord can make a fruitfull land barren*, Ps. 107.33-4, *for the sinnes of the people, and againe can turne barrennesse into plenty, of his mercy and goodnesse*, Ps. 107.35-6. Therefore to have the continuance of Gods mercies, take heede of sin:

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<sup>352</sup> Bernard feels compelled to recognise Naomi's and Ruth's sense of purpose, although this is not consistent with early modern views that women should show submissiveness in their actions.

<sup>353</sup> See John 2.17.

<sup>354</sup> Specifically, verse 9.

<sup>355</sup> See Matt. 24.13.

<sup>356</sup> Possibly the correct reference is Deut. 8.7-9.

when we enjoy them, prayse him for them; and when we be in scarcitie, seeke to him, because God can helpe, Ps. 65.10-12,<sup>357</sup> and he hath promised to give a blessing, Isa. 41.17-18; 2 Chron.7.14, and be- [p. 108] ware of murmuring in want, 1 Cor. 10,<sup>358</sup> remember there the judgement: yet is this a common thing amongst us now a dayes, upon any unseasonable weather, or worldly crosses, to repine, which yet easeth us nothing, but doth the more provoke God to punish us.

*And it came to passe, when they were come to Bethlehem.*] These words are a repetition of the former words immediately before. Thus plainly speaketh the Holy Ghost, declaring the matter not in curiousnesse<sup>359</sup> of speech, but in evidence of the truth.<sup>360</sup>

*That all the city was moved about them.*] That is, All the Inhabitants of the City. A figurative speech, as in Matt. 2.3. There was a generall comming together to see them. Such a moving is sometime for feare, Matt. 2.3, sometime for joy, 1 Kings 1.45; Matt. 21.10, and of a wonderment, Acts 2.6. All this noteth, that *Naomi* was not an obscure person before, but a woman of fame before shee went; and therefore was this observation of her returne, when shee now was come to Bethlehem. By which we may understand, that *the more renowned any be in prosperity, the more remarkeable are they in a downfall and in adversity*. This experience sheweth to be true among our selves, by very late instances;<sup>361</sup> for the eminency of such in

<sup>357</sup> The theme of God as 'our refuge and strength' (Ps. 46.1) is recurrent in the Psalms, but not at the place cited by Bernard.

<sup>358</sup> Specifically, verse 10.

<sup>359</sup> 'curiousness': 'The quality of being objectively curious: †a. Beauty; elaborateness; exquisiteness.' (OEDO).

<sup>360</sup> As on p. 17, Bernard draws attention to what he sees as the authentic overseeing by the holy Ghost of the narration of the story.

<sup>361</sup> Bernard may be thinking of public characters like Sir Walter Raleigh and Francis Bacon. Raleigh was in high favour during Elizabeth's reign, but was out of sympathy with James I's policy of restoring good relations with Spain and was imprisoned following allegations that he had plotted against James's accession. He was released to lead an expedition to Guiana, but was held responsible for an attack on a Spanish settlement there, and on his return was executed. As for Bacon, having held



prosperity have the eyes of many upon them, friends, enemies, equals; one sort lookes on with love, another with hatred, the last with envie and disdaine; and as they be affected in a mans dayes of prosperity, so will they speake and [p. 109] shew fully themselves in adversity.<sup>362</sup> This should make such as be set out so to the view of men, to behave themselves wisely in every estate, seeing they be so observable.

*Is this Naomi?*] There be three opinions of this, and it may be, that the company being mixt and of all sorts, they might speake the same words, but with differing minds. Some thinke the words spoken in contempt, *Is this Naomi ?*] Shee that was so faire and full, is shee now brought downe?<sup>363</sup> If this may stand, we see, that *poverty bringeth contempt even upon the best*. So was *Job* contemned by base fellowes, Chapter 30.1, 11. So was *David* of *Nabal*, of *Shemei*,<sup>364</sup> yea our Saviour upon the crosse. *Salomon* speaketh of the poore as subject to scorne and contempt, Prov. 17.5 and 19.4, which commeth through the want of heavenly wisdom, Prov. 11.12, the want of Gods feare, Job 6.14, and because men in prosperity are proud, and doe sinisterly<sup>365</sup> interpret of such as be in adversity. Doth adversity bring contempt? Then let us take heed how by our owne prodigality, folly, and wickednesse, we bring evill upon our selves; if it be the immediate hand of God, and not thy fault, thou shalt be censured, as *Job* was; how much more, when the cause is apparently from thy selfe? Againe, let men in adversity prepare to beare contempt; and not be impatient, nor take it to heart; for *Job*, *David*, Christ Jesus suffered it

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the high office of Lord Chancellor, he was prosecuted for alleged bribery and corruption, and ended his days in disgrace. For Raleigh, see Nicholls, and Williams, ODNB; for Bacon, see Peltonen, ODNB.

<sup>362</sup> Bernard discusses at length the possible reactions specifically of the Bethlehemites to Naomi's misfortune in his exposition below of '*Is this Naomi?*'. His discussion amplifies those of Lavater (44v-45v, 46r, 46v, 47r) and Topsell (76, 77, 78).

<sup>363</sup> The interpretation that some of the Bethlehemites scorned Naomi is found in Lavater (45v, 46r, 46v, 47r).

<sup>364</sup> 'Shimei' is the spelling in the Authorised Version.

<sup>365</sup> 'sinisterly': 'in a derogatory manner; with malicious depreciation' (OEDO).

patiently. If men learne not patience in this, it will make them lay violent hands upon themselves, as *Saul*, who could not [p. 110] endure contempt, and therefore would prevent it by killing himselfe <1 Sam. 31.14<sup>366</sup>>: for impatient proud hearts take contempt in adversity, to be worse to them then death it selfe. Indeed to mocke or despise the miserable, is an argument of the want of Gods feare, and that such are uncharitable, cruell, and void of mercy, for whom there remaineth judgement mercilesse; yet howsoever the wickedly proud behave themselves, we must in adversity be content. Some thinke the words to be spoken with admiration,<sup>367</sup> Is this *Naomi*! as if it had beene said, Oh what an alteration is here! And so taking the words, we learne, that *strange alterations in mens estates, make people to wonder whether it be in prosperity or adversity, for good or evill in any quality*. The wise and learned friends of *Job* were astonished at the change of his estate.<sup>368</sup> *Sauls* conversion was wondred at, 1 Sam. 10.11. So the gifts of the Apostles and miracles, Acts 2.7 and 4.13, and Christs wisdom and learning being but twelve yeeres old;<sup>369</sup> for men are more carryed away with the consideration of the outward meanes how things came to passe, then of the power and pleasure of God to make such an alteration. Therefore in great alterations looke for wonderings, and take no offence thereat; for it is mans nature so to doe at unusuall things: yea it is a certaine corruption and folly in the vulgar sort, who consider not the causes of things. It could not but somewhat move *Naomi*, to see such a concourse of people to come to wonder and gaze<sup>370</sup> upon them, as people doe at strangers, or at others in a change-

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<sup>366</sup> The correct reference is 1 Sam. 31.4.

<sup>367</sup> 'admiration': 'The action of wondering or marvelling; wonder, astonishment, surprise.' (OEDO). Lavater comments that the Bethlehemites wondered at the arrival of Naomi and Ruth (45r).

<sup>368</sup> See Job 2.12.

<sup>369</sup> See Luke 2.47.

<sup>370</sup> 'gaze': 'In early use: To look vacantly or curiously about; also, to stare, open one's eyes (with astonishment).' (OEDO).

[p. 111] able estate, even among our selves. But these follies of people wee must passe by. Some thinke the words to be uttered from pittie and commiseration towards her, as if it had beene said, Is this *Naomi*? Alas, what a change is in her? This is that good woman *Naomi*, whom wee cannot yet forget, though in her estate shee bee much altered.<sup>371</sup> And it is most like they spake in love and compassion, rather than in contempt, because shee was the kinswoman of the chiefest man among them, who, it seemeth, esteemed much of her: for hee entertained *Ruth* kindly for her sake, Chapter 2.6, 11, and sent her corne, Chapter 3.17, likewise the women spoke after very comfortably to her, Chapter 4.14, 16,<sup>372</sup> neither doth *Naomi* taxe them for contemning her,<sup>373</sup> but rather answereth to their esteeme of her name from her former estate: and therefore this being uttered from their love, and pittie, and good respect towards her, as being a grace fit for Gods people to shew to them which are in adversitie, wee learne: That *good and godly people doe nothing lesse esteeme of the vertuous, for their outward low estate and poverty*. These call her still *Naomi*, and so acknowledge her; and *Boaz* esteemed well of her, even in this poore estate: *Jonathan* did nothing lesse esteeme of *David*, because hee was out of the Kings favour: neither did *Joseph* of Arimathea lesse reverence or honor Jesus Christ, because he was condemned and executed as a malefactour among theeves: for outward crosses, afflictions and miseries of this life, are no staine to true piety, when the crosses fall [p. 112] upon good men for righteousness sake, or for the triall of their faith and patience. Let us not then, for outward adversitie, like the godly worse, when wee have loved them, or made shew of love in their prosperity, but in adversitie shew

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<sup>371</sup> The interpretation that the Bethlehemites were comforting Naomi is found in Topsell (77, 78).

<sup>372</sup> The correct reference is Chapter 4.14-15.

<sup>373</sup> Lavater makes the opposite observation that Naomi did not criticise the Bethlehemites who were scorning her, and argues that this illustrates her patience. (46v-47r)

greater tokens of love; and doe not as *Jobs* friends, sit downe and censure him; nor as Christs friends, and Saint *Pauls*, which forsooke them in their troubles. An healthfull member of the body is beloved, but when it is in distresse, then love of all the rest of the members most sheweth it selfe: and should not our love appeare to the godly in adversity, which be members with us of the same body in Christ?<sup>374</sup>

Verse 20. *And shee said unto them, Call mee not Naomi; call me Marah: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.*

This is *Naomi* her answer unto the multitude, flocking about her, calling her *Naomi*, continuing a dissuasion for so calling her, and shewing what name they should give her, with the reason thereof, drawne from her present poore estate; which shee setteth out partly in this verse, and partly in the next.

*And shee said unto them, Call mee not Naomi.*] This name signifieth pleasant and merry, which in her adversity shee thought did not befit her, and therefore she did not rejoyce in it. *Adversitie maketh the afflicted nothing to regard worldly names and titles of a better condition and estate, [p. 113] while they be in miserie*, and have lost their former outward comforts, if they be wise and truely humbled; for such as be humbled indeed, are not vainely in love with goodly names and titles, to which their estate is not answerable. Which checketh the foolish pride of such, as being in a base beggerly condition, living almost of almes, hanging upon this and that friend, yet forsooth, will brag of their name, their house, and Gentility, or rather indeed, to call it, as they make it, Gentilisme,<sup>375</sup> through their lewd and vaine conversation.

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<sup>374</sup> See 1 Cor. 12.12-27.

<sup>375</sup> ‘gentilism’: ‘Heathenism, paganism; a heathen belief or practice.’ ([OEDO](#)).

*Call me Marah.*] That is, bitter, one in a heavie and distressed estate. *The truely humbled desire to be accounted as they be, and not as they be not*; as *Naomi* here is willing to be called *Marah*, because her estate was answerable. Shee was not proud, shee submitted her selfe to Gods hand, and therefore shee refused not a name according to the nature of her present condition. Whose humility may checke the pride of such as would have better names then they deserve, seeking the name of *Goodman*, when goodnesse is farre from them; of *Master*, when their Gentlemanship did hardly creepe out of a dunghill; of worshipfull Esquire, right worshipfull, and many such vaine titles, which every Upstart now in these dayes doe eagerly affect, not for any desert of vertue, but for that they have gotten some money to put to usurie, or procured some office basely by their money, or a little better outward estate by illiberall and base scraping, pinching, and niggardly sparing, or [p. 114] by depending upon some person in authority, by whose countenance they may domineere over their poore neighbours, or by some such way and meanes, whereof this now present age affordeth instances enow; yet are such farre enough off from the true causes of Gentry, worship, and due honor. This good womans humility and patience,<sup>376</sup> may also checke the pride and impatiencie of such as cannot endure a name like their nature; they can be content to be Usurers, but not so to be called; they can live as Misers, but will not so be accounted; the denomination from their sinnefull practices is worse to them, then the sinnes which they doe commit; for that they more are touched with the shame of the evill before men, then with the offence thereby committed against God. Here it may be demanded, Whether any may be called by any other name then formerly they have beene called by? We see here that

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<sup>376</sup> Bernard again draws attention to Naomi's characteristics conforming to early modern prescriptions for women's conduct.

*Naomi* would be called *Marah*; *Jacob* was after called *Israel*;<sup>377</sup> *Abram*, *Abraham*,<sup>378</sup> *Sarah* *Sarai*,<sup>379</sup> and many such instances in Scripture; as *Saul* called after *Paul*,<sup>380</sup> and *Joseph* called *Barsabas* <Acts 1.23>: which may be to expresse some grace in them, for which they be praise-worthy; as *Jacob* being called *Israel*, because he wrastled and prevailed with God, so *Joses* called *Barnabas*, the sonne of consolation, for his rare love to the Church, and for giving such an example thereof to the Apostles <Acts 4.36>: *Simon* must be called *Peter* for his constancie.<sup>381</sup> So to expresse some notorious evill, on the other side *Barjesus* was called *Elymas*, and *Pashur* must [p. 115] be named *Magor-Missabib* <Acts 13.6, 8; Jer. 20.3>. And we see by ancient practice, for greater honour men were called by other names, then from their fathers families, which they purchased as a title of their honour, and for the reward of vertue, to encourage men to noble atchivements worthy of honour, being by others put upon them for the praise of their vertues, without flatterie and vaine-glory;<sup>382</sup> and some names also were invented for disgrace of vice, in such as deserved the same, but they also without scorne, derision, malice, and evill will to the party, otherwise then to beate him out from his sinne, which may not be for such sinne as he committeth of infirmitie, but for open and notorious enormities, and from which he will not be hardly reclaymed without some note of infamy.

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<sup>377</sup> See Gen. 32.28, 35.10.

<sup>378</sup> See Gen. 17.5.

<sup>379</sup> See Gen. 17.15. Sarai's name was changed to Sarah.

<sup>380</sup> See Acts 13.9.

<sup>381</sup> See Matt. 16.18.

<sup>382</sup> As with the Romanes: *Cato Censorinus*, *Scipio Africanus*, *AEmilius Macedonicus*, *Antoninus Pius*, *etcetera*. [B]

Cato was noted for his energetic and fearless conduct as Censor, Scipio was noted for his conduct of war with Carthage, Aemilius for his campaign against Macedonia, and Antonius for his piety (see Howatson 119-20 (Cato), 511 (Scipio), 413 (Aemilius), 41 (Antoninus)).

*For the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.]* The reason why shee would be called *Marah*, because of her bitter affliction which the Lord Almighty hath laid upon her. Whence we may learne these lessons,

I. That *the Lord is Almighty*, Gen. 17.1, for he can doe what he will in heaven and in earth, Ps. 115.3. This should worke confidence in his Word, for what he saith, he will doe, he can doe, his power can effect it. This must make us humble ourselves under his mightie hand, 1 Pet. 5.6, he is able to destroy and cast into Hell, Matt. 10.28. By this let us be encouraged to doe what he commandeth: for he can beare us out in it, and can supply our wants, 2 Cor. 9.7-8. Hence may we gather comfort against all that rise up against us [p. 116] for the Lords cause: for he is greater then all, John 10.29. And we may, to conclude, learne to hope well of others, though they have long gone astray: for God is able to save them, Rom. 11.23.

II. That *the Almighty can alter an estate into the cleane contrarie*, as *Naomi* into *Marah*, mirth into mourning, sweet into sowre, honor into dishonor; and contrarily, heavinesse into joy, disgrace into high esteeme, and so forth; as we may see in *Jobs* downefall, and also raising up againe; in *Hamans* honour, into extreme contempt; in *Mordecaies* base estate, into great dignitie,<sup>383</sup> so in *Josephs* exaltation likewise and in many others: for every mans estate is in the Lords hand to alter it at his will, 1 Sam. 2.7-8. Let none be proud in their prosperity, for God can cast them downe. See it in *Haman*, *Nebuchadnezer*,<sup>384</sup> *Balthasar*,<sup>385</sup> and *Herod*,<sup>386</sup> whom God made spectacles of his displeasure for abusing their prosperitie, as we have examples

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<sup>383</sup> See the Book of Esther.

<sup>384</sup> See Dan. 4.31-3.

<sup>385</sup> Possibly Bernard refers to Belshazzar who held a feast which was followed by his death. See Dan. 5.26-30.

<sup>386</sup> See Acts 12.21-3.

of late among our selves.<sup>387</sup> And as prosperity should not make us proud, because God can cast us downe: so adversity should not make us despaire, because God can raise us up, as he did *Job*, *Joseph*, and *Mordecai*.

III. That *the godly feele a bitter taste in their afflictions*, they are distastfull unto them; for no affliction is joyous for the present <1 Pet. 1.7; Heb. 12.11>, which maketh infirmities appeare in the best in time of their troubles, as we may see in *Job*, *Jeremie* and *Hannah* <Jer. 20.12, 14 15;<sup>388</sup> 1 Sam. 1>. For none, even of the Saints of God, are perfit in faith, love, patience, and other vertues, which might make us endure afflictions quietly: And therefore we are [p. 117] not to marvell when we heare words of impatiencie come from weake men, nor sit downe and censure them, but to judge charitably, though they cannot beare afflictions altogether with chearefulnesse, quietly and without strugling: For though the Spirit be willing, yet flesh and bloud are weake, and even the best manifest their weakenesse, and the bitter taste which they have of affliction.<sup>389</sup>

Verse 21. *I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home againe empty: Why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?*

Naomi goeth on in her speech to the people, so speaking of her, as is before noted:<sup>390</sup> first shewing how the Lord had dealt bitterly with her, and then why they

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<sup>387</sup> Again, Bernard may be thinking of Raleigh and Bacon, who might well have appeared in their downfall spectacles of God's displeasure.

<sup>388</sup> The correct reference is Jer. 20.14-18.

<sup>389</sup> Bernard's discussion here resembles, but is more condensed than, Topsell's exposition of Naomi's words here with reference to her bitterness. (Topsell 81-3).

<sup>390</sup> See pp. 109-112.



should not call her *Naomi*, for that the Lord had testified against her, and afflicted her: thus shee complaineth and amplifieth the same by contraries.

*I went out full.*] Shee here speaketh of her former estate, when shee went from among Gods people. The word is taken from a full vessell; and this is to be understood of her outward estate, in which shee felt no want, no more then there is want in a full vessel; for shee had an husband and two sonnes, and no doubt other things sufficient: for the words imply shee went not for want, but for feare of want. If the words be understood of her fulnesse in her husband and children, it [p. 118] noteth, that *a good woman feeleth no want, while she hath a loving husband and obedient children*; for she taketh such contentment in them, as shee cannot feele want; neither will such an husband and children see her to want. When women are thus happy, let them blesse God for their full estate. If the words be understood of fulnesse for outward things withall, and yet could not abyde at home, wee may learne, that *in present fulnesse and plenty there may want contentment* <Eccles. 4.8>, either through a greedy desire which never hath enough, or through a distrustfull heart fearing to want, with which these were so troubled, as it made them leave Gods people for saving of their goods, and to goe among heathen Idolaters:<sup>391</sup> For whither will not distrust of God, and love of riches, leade men? They erre therefore, which being in a poore estate, thinke contentment to be found in riches, and fullnesse of these earthly things, when *Salomon* telleth us the contrarie <Eccles. 5.10>, and daily experience from the Rich and wealthy of the world doth apparently shew it.

*And the Lord hath brought me home againe empty.*] It is not said that the Lord sent her out full, but shee went out of her selfe, and he brought her home againe, but

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<sup>391</sup> Bernard amplifies the criticism he applied earlier to Elimelech for leaving Bethlehem Judah (12-13).

yet empty, shee lost what shee hoped to keepe. This good woman in this speech giveth us to know, that shee tooke notice of a fault in voluntarily leaving Gods people, to save her goods, for which the Lord corrected her, yet in mercy brought her home againe, though with losse.<sup>392</sup> Note hence these things:

[p. 119] I. That *it is a fault, voluntarily for safety of goods through distrust, to leave Gods people, and goe to live among Idolaters*; for such love their bodies better then their soules, they expose themselves to great dangers, and deprive themselves of the publike and ordinary meanes of life and salvation.<sup>393</sup> If such have warrant, as the woman had by *Elisha* <2 Kings 8.1-2>; they may have hope: but if they, voluntarily distrusting God, take such a course, they may rather looke for a curse, then expect a blessing.

II. That *there is no certainty in worldly wealth*: For here is mention of fulnesse and emptinesse in *Naomi*; and this may we see in the former examples of *Job*, of *Haman*: so in *Salomon* and his sonne *Rehoboam*, in *Babylon* and *Tyre* <Isa. 23.9; Ezek. 27.2, 27>; for the preservation of outward estates, is not in the hands of the possessours, nor within their power, but in God who is the Giver: and againe, man in his abundance doth forget God, and so causeth the Lord to take it from them, as he did the Kingdome from *Saul*,<sup>394</sup> the tenne Tribes from *Salomons* house, the government from *Jeroboam*,<sup>395</sup> and the Empire from *Belshazzar*.<sup>396</sup> Wee are not then to set our hearts on our outward prosperity, Ps. 62.10, neither to glory in our

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<sup>392</sup> On p. 13 Bernard expresses the view that Naomi and her children were not at fault for following Elimelech so long as he did not lead them into evil. Here, his position seems to have changed in that he does not contradict the opinion he attributes to Naomi, that she was culpable, responsible as a wife for the family's course of action. Similarly, on p. 120, he represents Naomi as having gone astray.

<sup>393</sup> That is, public worship and the routine of a godly household.

<sup>394</sup> See 1 Sam. 15.26-9, 35.

<sup>395</sup> See 1 Kings 14.10.

<sup>396</sup> See Dan. 5.26-30.

riches <Jer. 9.23>: for outward glory is but as a fading flowre, and as the warme sunneshine in a cold winter day, soone gone, and all the delight thereof.

III. That *oftentimes the way and meanes which men take to prevent want, by the same they bring it upon them*, as it fell out here with *Naomi*, whose husband left Gods people, to goe into Moab, to [p. 120] save their estate, and there lost all, so as *Naomi* returneth home in very great want, who went out full. The like befell *Lot* in leaving *Abraham* for this worldly goods, and going to dwell in Sodom, where he left and lost all, and was glad to escape with his life:<sup>397</sup> for if the meanes we use be not good, it is farre from helping or preserving us, as by Gods cursing thereof, it turneth to our ruine; for *Jeroboam* by his policie lost his kingdome. Therefore in seeking to uphold, or to get an estate, looke to the meanes whether good or evill, lest we come short of that we doe looke for. It is ill to leave the meanes of the soules safety, for these worldly commodities; after which we must not make haste, lest we come to want <Prov. 21.5 and 28.22>; neither may we use unlawfull courses to get them: for the treasures of wickednesse profit not, but shall come to an ill end <Prov. 21.6-7 and 10.2>; as they are gotten, so in time commonly are they spent.

IV. That *such of Gods children as goe astray, he will bring home againe, but yet with correction*, as he here doth *Naomi*; and as he did the Prodigall sonne: which he doth in mercy, to make them to know their error, and to walke afterwards more warily. It is comfort that God will in mercy seeke up his children, and not lose one of them <Luke 15.4; John 17<sup>398</sup>>; but yet feare to goe astray: for surely he will scourge them for their outroads, when he bringeth them home, though it be a *David*,<sup>399</sup> a *Jehosaphat*,<sup>400</sup> or a *Josias*.<sup>401</sup>

<sup>397</sup> See Gen. 13 and 14.12, 16 and 19.16.

<sup>398</sup> Specifically, verse 12.

<sup>399</sup> See 2 Sam. 12.10-12, 14.

*Why then call ye me Naomi?]* Hence learne, that the *humbled and afflicted* take no pleasure to [p. 121] *be remembred of their former prosperity by names and titles*; for it but increaseth sorrow, and affordeth no comfort. What comfort might it be to tell *Haman* of his former honor, when he was going to hanging?<sup>402</sup> What joy to *Herod* to heare of his glory and the applauding of him before, when now the judgement was upon him, and he eaten with wormes, for his vaine glory and pride?<sup>403</sup> The afflicted are not hereby comforted, for *Naomi* taketh no pleasure in that name, whilst she is by her estate *Marah*. It is in vaine to mention to the heaue-hearted what they have beene, except upon certaine hope of recoverie to the same againe; but their sorrow must be eased by better meanes of comfort, by shewing them the cause, the end, and benefit of Gods Fatherly chastisements, and so forth.

*Seeing the Lord hath testified against mee.]* Note hence:

I. That *mans comfort is nothing able to allay the bitternesse of Gods discomforts upon us*. Their calling her *Naomi* could doe her no good, while she knew her selfe called by the Lord, *Marah*, and whilst hee did witnesse against her. What can it profit a woman of place, whilest she is in the bitternesse of her soule, and afflicted by some grievous crosse, to be called Lady, Madame, and to be spoken unto with tearmes of honour, whilest under Gods hand? This should make the greatest therefore take more delight in seeking to please God, and to enjoy his favour and countenance, than to be dignified with the most highest [p. 122] titles: for these will afford no comfort, when God will not afford it.

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<sup>400</sup> See 2 Chron. 20.37.

<sup>401</sup> See 2 Chron. 35.20-4.

Bernard again emphasises the punitive character of God.

<sup>402</sup> See Esth. 7.6-10.

<sup>403</sup> See Acts 12.20-3.

II. That *afflictions are commonly the Lords witnesses against us, for some thing amisse in us*: for the first cause of them is sinne, and the Lord threatneth them for sin, which the godly in affliction apply unto themselves. In affliction let us search out our waies and repent of our sinnes, as did *David, Rehoboam*,<sup>404</sup> and as the Parable of the prodigall sonne teacheth, and the exhortations to repentance upon the Lords afflicting of his people. We may not be like those in *Ezechiels* daies, who murmured against the Lords hand upon them, as not being the guilty parties, but that others had sinned, and they unjustly punished <Ezek. 18.2>.

*And the Almighty hath afflicted me.*] This sheweth how God did witnesse against her, even by afflicting her. He witnesseth against us by his Word written, by his Messengers expounding and applying the Word, by our own consciences accusing, and by his corrections, and rod punishing. By all which waies God speaketh actually unto us, for our amendment; and the godly heare him speake unto them; they together with the correction, applying the Word unto themselves for their instruction, doe make the affliction profitable unto them. The conclusion which hence I will note, is this: That *the godly doe ascribe all their afflictions to the Lord*, as *Naomi* doth here, and as *Job* did, Chapter 1<sup>405</sup> and 6.4 and 30.11, because they know that nothing is by chance, but by his providence, Amos 3.6; 2 Chron. 15.6; Isa. 45.7. [p. 123] Things fall not out by meere naturall causes, Job 5.6, but as the Lord will. And therefore should we learne patience, seeing that afflictions come from God. This did worke patience in *Joseph* <Gen. 45.7<sup>406</sup>>, in *Job* <Job 1<sup>407</sup>>, and in *David* <2 Sam. 16.11>; and so it will in all such as feare the Lord, and submit

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<sup>404</sup> See 2 Chron. 12.6.

<sup>405</sup> Specifically verse 21.

<sup>406</sup> The correct reference may be Gen. 39.21.

<sup>407</sup> Specifically, verses 20-2.

themselves to his good will and pleasure, as our Saviour did in the Garden, saying to his Father; *Not as I will, but as thou wilt* <Matt. 26.39>.

Verse 22. *So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitesse her daughter in law with her, which returned out of the Countrey of Moab: and they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of Barley harvest.*

The conclusion of this Chapter, and an introduction into that which followeth. This is a briefe summe of their journey, shewing who, from whence, whither, and at what time of the yeere it was.

*So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitesse her daughter in law with her, which returned out of the Countrey of Moab, and they came to Bethlehem.]* Of *Naomi* and *Ruth*, and their loving journeying together before hath beene spoken.<sup>408</sup> Yet note how the holy Ghost, in naming *Ruth*, omitteth not to shew againe her Countrey, and that shee was a Moabitesse, and not an Israelitesse by birth, and but daughter in law to *Naomi*, yet she came with her to Bethlehem, and that in safety. Whence note,

I. That *grace can unite, where all outward meanes [p. 124] are rather hinderances than furtherances thereto*, as country, education, and age. *Ruth* was of Moab, she was otherwise brought up than Israelites were, as a Moabitesse woman; shee was young, and *Naomi* old, and but daughter in law to *Naomi*, yet shee held on to the end.<sup>409</sup> Labour wee for grace, which can make us good, and acceptable to God, what otherwise shall bee wanting unto us in worldly respects.

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<sup>408</sup> See pp. 106-7.

<sup>409</sup> Bernard's noting of Ruth's capacity to bond with Naomi as an instance of union despite factors such as education and age is potentially radical.

II. That *they travell safely, whom God conducteth*; for *Naomi* saith before, that the Lord brought her home; and here is shewed their Countrey. So *Jacob* passed well on to Mesopotamia, and returned with safety, because God was with him <Gen. 28.15>. So did *Israel* journey to Canaan, in which they were safely seated, because the Lord was with them. For he loveth those whom he taketh care of, he never slumbreth nor sleepeth, and hee is almighty, ever present also to helpe them. Let us then get him for our Guide. And this wee shall doe, if we undertake a lawfull journey, if we pray with *Moses*, that the Lords presence would goe with us,<sup>410</sup> and beleeeve, as he hath promised, that he will neither faile us, nor forsake us.

III. That *such as be attent to their journey, and desire to come to the end, make no outroads*. These came from *Moab* to Bethlehem, they had no idle vagaries that we read of. Old *Naomi* desired to see her countrey, and young *Ruth* was not wantonly disposed, but constantly kept her company. These two may bee types of the beleevers, Jew and Gentile travelling to heaven,<sup>411</sup> and may teach [p. 125] us to attend our journey, and beware of by-paths and idle outgoings, but to keepe on straight, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left, but to remove our feet from evill.

*In the beginning of barley harvest.*] This circumstance of the time and season, doth argue the truth of the Story, for shewing the certainty of that, which *Naomi* had heard before, verse 6, and also to be an introduction to that which followeth in the next chapter. This harvest was in part of March, and part of Aprill: for so much

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<sup>410</sup> See Exod. 33.13-16.

<sup>411</sup> In deriving from *Ruth* a foreshadowing of individuals in the Christian dispensation, Bernard shows some affinity to the medieval Christian interpretations of the book. Hugh of St. Cher depicts Naomi, the primitive Church leading Ruth, the church of the Gentiles to Bethlehem, that is to faith in Christ (MET 48).

sooner is harvest there than here. This harvest time is that, which is the time promised to all the earth, Gen. 8, but yet not at one time to all. Now note here this with verse 6 and we may see that harvest is called Gods visiting his people with bread. Whence we learne, That *harvest is Gods blessing, in his mercy giving bread to sustaine mans life*. This is his common blessing, Gen. 8.22, and promised to the obedient with plenty, Lev. 26.5, 10, for times and seasons are in the Lords hand; and this time is the appointed time to reape and gather in the corne for food, by which man liveth. Therefore first, let us acknowledge God, to be the Lord of the harvest, as hee calleth himselfe <Matt. 9<sup>412</sup>>, and confesse this blessing to be from him. Secondly, to pray to him for it, seeing it is from him. Thirdly, to bee thankfull when wee enjoy this blessing, and to pay the due allotted for the Lords service<sup>413</sup> in testimony of thanks. In old time none appeared before the Lord empty <Ps. 147.14;<sup>414</sup> Ps. 144.13;<sup>415</sup> Exod. 23.16<sup>416</sup> and 34.22;<sup>417</sup> Deut. 16.16-17>. Fourthly, to labour diligently at this time, seeing it is the appointed time [p. 126] to gather in Gods blessings: and be not slothfull, the Ant will teach thee diligence <Prov. 10.5 and 6.8<sup>418</sup>>. Fifthly, to take it as a punishment from God, when this harvest is taken from us, which is done divers waies, as by cursing the fruit that it prosper not, or by sending unseasonable weather to destroy the fruits <Deut. 28;<sup>419</sup> Joel 1.11-12;<sup>420</sup> 2 Sam. 12.17;<sup>421</sup> Prov. 26.1>.<sup>422</sup> Lastly, note hence, that it was in the very beginning

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<sup>412</sup> Specifically, verse 38.

<sup>413</sup> That is, to fulfil the obligations incurred by membership of the Church, in time, money ad priorities in general.

<sup>414</sup> This biblical reference appears to be erroneous.

<sup>415</sup> This biblical reference appears to be erroneous.

<sup>416</sup> Verse 15 is also relevant.

<sup>417</sup> Verse 20 is also relevant.

<sup>418</sup> Verses 6 and 7 are also relevant.

<sup>419</sup> Specifically, verses 16, 18, 23-4, 30, 33, 38-9, and 42.

<sup>420</sup> Verses 4, 7, 10, and 17 are also relevant.

<sup>421</sup> The correct reference is 1 Sam. 12.17-18..



of Barley harvest, which was before their Wheate harvest, for they had both wheate harvest, as Gen. 30.14 and 15.1,<sup>423</sup> and heere Barley harvest, and this also first, as 2 Sam. 21.9-10. So that *Naomi* neglected no time, but tooke the very beginnning, as soone as ever shee heard of the Lords gracious visitation and mercy towards her people. Thus can wee provide for the body; let us care also for the soule, that it want not the foode which endureth to eternall life.<sup>424</sup> And thus much for this first chapter.

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<sup>422</sup> Bernard evidently has in mind the harvest failures in England which were most serious a number of decades before this commentary was published.

<sup>423</sup> The correct reference is Judg. 15.1.

<sup>424</sup> Here, Bernard echoes the point made by Lavater, that Naomi did not neglect the occasion (Lavater 48v). Bernard derives from this a spiritual lesson. Topsell precedes Bernard in finding spiritual lessons in Naomi's efforts. In particular, he exhorts his readers not to be held back from the profession of religion, as Naomi was not hindered in her journey to God's people (Topsell 86-7). Bernard appears to be synthesising the expositions of the earlier commentators.

## CHAPTER II.

This Chapter setteth out how *Ruth* was intertained after shee came among God[s] people, how shee behaved her selfe, and what favour she found at the hands of the chiefest man of the place, where shee abode with her mother in law.

[p. 127] Verse 1. *And Naomi had a kinsman of her husbands, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech, and his name was Boaz.*

Here is the party set out, whom God in his secret counsel had provided for *Ruth*,<sup>1</sup> who is described by his affinity with *Naomi*, and how that was, then by his wealth, next, by his family, and lastly, by his name; the drift<sup>2</sup> is, to declare, what moved so great a man to shew such kindnesse to *Ruth* a stranger,<sup>3</sup> and a poore woman.

*And Naomi had a kinsman of her husbands.] Naomi* was not basely married, but to one of an honourable stocke, though now growne poore; yet this her affinity brought *Boaz* to have a good respect unto *Ruth*, even for kindred sake, and therefore are these words set downe, as is before noted. Here observe,

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<sup>1</sup> Bernard's drawing attention here to the outcome of the relationship of *Ruth* and *Boaz* in marriage invites his readers to evaluate their behaviour according to the extent to which it conforms to early modern views of how courtship should be conducted.

<sup>2</sup> 'drift': 'The conscious direction of action or speech to some end; the end itself; what one is 'driving at'; purpose, intention, object, aim.' (OEDO).

<sup>3</sup> One contemporary meaning of 'stranger' was 'One who belongs to another country, a foreigner; chiefly (now exclusively), one who resides in or comes to a country to which he is a foreigner; an alien.' (OEDO). At this point, though, Bernard does not choose to describe *Ruth* as a Moabitess. Moabites were excluded from the congregation of the Lord (Deut. 23.3). It may be that he does not wish to draw attention, in connection with *Ruth*'s meeting *Boaz*, to the fact that this prohibition appears to apply to *Ruth*. However, in chapter 1 he notes that it was permissible for *Boaz* to marry *Ruth* because she was a convert. (28). The issue recurs later in the commentary, notably on p. 401.

I. That *rich and poore may be nigh of kin*. *Naomi* had a great wealthie man to her kinsman, by her husband, and that very nigh too, Chapter 3.1,<sup>4</sup> for diversity of outward estates doth not alter blood and kindred, though it make a change in their persons. Let not therefore the rich disdaine their poore kindred: for povertie is no disgrace where there is not want of honesty: Christ was poore, and very poore, living of the almes of others. God chooseth his people of such, Jas. 2.<sup>5</sup> None but have poore kindred, and the best have in some of their forefathers beene meane enough.

II. That *even kindred either is, or should be of [p. 128] force to move kinsfolke to respect one another*. This is gathered hence, for that the scope<sup>6</sup> of these words is to shew how *Boaz* came to respect *Ruth*, which was for Kindred sake, yet chiefly for her vertues, as after shall be shewed; and for love of kindred, see it in *Rahab*, Josh. 2.13, and in the Sichemites, Judg. 9.3, though in other respects, in their choosing of *Abimelech*, they were not to be commended.<sup>7</sup> See this also in *Samsons* friends, Judg. 16,<sup>8</sup> in *Cornelius* to his friends, Acts 10.24. For kindred are bone of bone, as the *Israelites* spake of David <2 Sam. 5.1> and are as the branches from one roote, and as members of one body, and therefore must love one another; which reproveth this age, which careth not for their kindred, except they bee rich, which is the sinne of unnaturalnesse, 2 Tim. 3.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The correct reference is Chapter 3.12.

<sup>5</sup> Specifically verse 5.

<sup>6</sup> 'scope': 'Something aimed at or desired; something which one wishes to effect or attain; an end in view; an object, purpose, aim.' (OEDO). This meaning corresponds with Bernard's definition of 'scope' as 'the scope or principall intendement of the holy Ghost in that place' (FS 20).

<sup>7</sup> Bernard refers to Abimelech's slaughter of all but one of his brothers before he was made king (see Judg. 9.5).

<sup>8</sup> Specifically, verse 31.

<sup>9</sup> Specifically, verse 3, which refers to men 'Without natural affection'.

Bernard here criticises contemporary attitudes to poverty. Charity is a theme of this chapter of the commentary.

*A mighty man of wealth.*] Yet also a godly man, as appeareth by his godly behavior, his speeches, his workes of mercy, his praising vertue in others, and his obedience unto Gods Law, in taking *Ruth* to wife.<sup>10</sup> We see then, that *a wealthy man may be a godly man sometime*. Such a wealthy man was *Abraham*: so *Isaac*, *Jacob*, *Job*, and *Joseph* of Arimathea: for goods and graces are not in themselves opposite, being both the gifts of God; the one may helpe the other, grace to guide and dispose well of goods, and goods well used, to declare and set forth the graces of the heart in almes-deeds, in maintenance of Gods Word, and in doing other Christian duties: grace humbleth, where riches would puffe up, yet riches well used bring grace in estimation before men, for they [p. 129] inable men to shew forth godlinesse, and to passe on their time with the more comfort <Eccles. 5.20<sup>11</sup>>, and to countenance and defend their poore Christian brethren in well-doing. Therefore if grace and goods goe together, thou hast great cause to blesse God: for it is a most happy estate, to bee rich towards the world, and to God too, to bee rich body and soule: But although this is a very rare estate, yet wee see that they may meete together; and therefore we may not thinke, that he which is rich, cannot be religious. True it is, that it is hard for a rich man to enter into the Kingdome of heaven <Luke 18.24-5>; but it is not impossible. If any aske mee why so few are rich which be godly? I answer, Because the Lord chooseth most of such as be poore, for his people; these make conscience of getting goods, and will not follow the way of evill men and worldlings, to enrich themselves, neither will the Lord make many of them rich, lest they should waxe in their wealth proud, and forgetfull of God, as men in their abundance do. Why, will some say, are most rich men hardly religious? Because God chooseth few of them

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<sup>10</sup> Bernard draws attention to Boaz's piety whereas the biblical narrative focuses on his wealth, and again alludes to the subsequent marriage of Ruth and Boaz.

<sup>11</sup> Verse 19 is also relevant.

<1 Cor. 1.26>, they be taken up with the cares of this life, which choaketh the seede of the Word in them <Matt. 13<sup>12</sup>>; they set their hearts upon their riches, as they see them encrease, and are wholly taken up therewith, so as they cannot set their mindes on better things <Mark 10.17<sup>13</sup>>. Lastly, they make riches their God, so as they cannot serve God, because they serve Mammon.<sup>14</sup>

*And of the family of Elimelech.]* So as *Boaz* and hee were both of one house and stocke, and very [p. 130] nobly borne both of them, Chapter 4.20, 21, yet *Elimelech* poore, and his wife in a very meane estate: so as wee hence may see, That *parents may provide for posterity, but which of their children shall be rich, which poore, is of Gods disposing, and not of mans forecast*; as wee may see in these two, whose Ancestor *Nahshon* was the Prince of Judah, the Royall Tribe, and ruled over 74000 men of war, or was fit for it <Num. 1.7, 16 and 2.3, 27;<sup>15</sup> Eccles. 5.14>.<sup>16</sup> Thus parents may have a goodly portion, when some of theirs may have nothing left them. For riches are Gods gift, he can bestow them, and he can take them away againe, which *Job* acknowledged.<sup>17</sup> If parents cannot make their children rich, then let them not with too much care vexe<sup>18</sup> themselves for them: let them not think that by their scraping together, they can make them wealthy after them; that is Gods blessing; that is his mercy; for if he blesse it not, Oh how soone is that consumed by children, which parents got with great labour and care, and perhaps with an ill conscience too, which procured the curse, besides much infamy and hatred of men in

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<sup>12</sup> Specifically, verse 22.

<sup>13</sup> Verses 18-22 are also relevant.

<sup>14</sup> Bernard derives from Boaz's piety a godly role for the wealthy in his society despite the spiritual drawbacks of wealth to which he draws attention. His vision of the place of the wealthy in the godly community is further developed in Chapter 3, where he expresses the radical view that they should labour in a calling (pp. 252-4).

<sup>15</sup> The correct reference is Num. 1.27. Num. 2.4 is also relevant.

<sup>16</sup> Bernard expands on Nahshon on pp. 475-6.

<sup>17</sup> See Job 1.21.

<sup>18</sup> 'vex': 'To be distressed in mind; to feel unhappy or dissatisfied; to fret or grieve.' (OEDO).

their life time! Is it not madnesse in parents to damne themselves, in hope to make their children great, seeing they cannot effect what they strive for, except God bee so pleased to have it? And then heere let children looke up to God, and learne to feare him, and rest not in their parents gettings, but rather let them set themselves to honest callings, and learne how to bee able honestly and frugally to manage that which shall be given to them, that when they shall have such [p. 131] goods and lands in their hands, which their parents shall leave them, they may the better be able to employ them, and so preserve wisely that which is befallen unto them: For let parents get what they can, if they leave their children without callings, idly brought up, to goe bravely, and to follow the loose wayes of most rich mens children in these dayes, as not knowing any thing, but how to play the Gentlemen, as they call it; a consumption will soone sease upon all, and turne them out of all, and they become beggers, as dayly experience sheweth.<sup>19</sup>

*And his name was Boaz.*] This is added for more certaine knowledge of the party her kinsman; circumstances make Histories more credible, and therefore are they expressed.<sup>20</sup> This name signifieth [*strength or fortitude*]<sup>21</sup> whose sonne he was, and of what house he came, is noted afterwards in the end of the fourth chapter.

Verse 2. *And Ruth the Moabitesse said unto Naomi, Let me now goe to the field, and gleane eares of corne after him, in whose sight I shall find grace. And shee said unto her, Goe, my daughter.*

<sup>19</sup> Bernard expresses, here as elsewhere in the commentary, his disapproval of rich individuals squandering their wealth, and his corrective to this, that the children of the rich should have callings.

<sup>20</sup> The observation that circumstances give histories credibility echoes Topsell (*Topsell* 3).

<sup>21</sup> This meaning of Boaz's name is found in the medieval Christian commentaries on the book of Ruth, but not in the medieval Jewish commentaries collected by Beattie. This is consistent with the Jewish commentators' general omission to supply the meanings of names, although Abraham ibn Ezra does comment that the events by reason of which Mahlon and Chilion were given their names are unknown (D.R.G. Beattie, *Jewish Exegesis of the Book of Ruth* 135).

This verse is a request made, and sheweth, first, of whom it is made: then, to whom, and for what, with the graunt thereunto, as is apparent by the words: The scope is to shew how *great things come to passe by poore and unlikely beginnings*; as we may see in this of *Ruth*, of *Joseph* comming to be a Prince in Egypt: the like may be seen in *Moses*, [p. 132] yea in the glorious advancement of Christs Gospel. By all which Gods power and wisdom is shewed, mans wisdom cast downe, and our selves encouraged to have faith and confidence in God.

*And Ruth the Moabitesse said unto Naomi.]* When *Ruth* was come into Judah, shee and *Naomi* dwelt together, but yet in poore estate, and now time serving to helpe themselves by labour, *Ruth* bethinketh her selfe what to do in this case; shee murmureth not against the God of Israel, as his owne people the Israelites did in the wilderness, and were ready to returne into Egypt; shee minded<sup>22</sup> not Moab; shee was not offended with *Naomi* her povertie, nor with the rest<sup>23</sup> for not affording her plenty; but shee resolveth to use her owne labour for her helpe, while the time did serve. From which we may learne, That *honest hearts truly intertaining Religion, doe not forsake it or the godly for worldly wants*. *Ruth* could not for these things be made to start backe; nor Saint *Paul* for all his afflictions;<sup>24</sup> for sincere hearts love Religion for it selfe, and the godly for their vertues, not for their outward estate; they also doe know a reward of eternall happinesse to be in the life to come, which they set before them, and therefore do not take offence from the outward things of this life, which they least esteeme of, and looke to have the least share in them; which reproveth those that for the wants of the world bid farewell to the Word, like

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<sup>22</sup> ‘mind’: ‘To care for, like, value, wish for.’ (OEDO).

<sup>23</sup> There is an obscurity here. Bernard may be referring to the rest of the Bethlehemites or to the rest of *Ruth*’s circumstances.

<sup>24</sup> See Rom. 8.35-9.

*Demasses*:<sup>25</sup> but the Apostles for Christ forsooke all; and *Moses* chose the poore estate of the godly to live religiously, [p. 133] before the Court of *Pharaoh* to live viciously. Let this checke also those which upon every want murmur against God, and are ready with the rebellious company in the Wildernesse, to returne into Egyptian bondage of sinne and *Satan*, for to injoy some outward and worldly contentment.

*Let me now goe to the field.*] Though it was honest, good, and necessary which *Ruth* intended, yet would shee not goe abroad without her mother in lawes leave and good liking:<sup>26</sup> For *godly children hold themselves bound to be at the disposing of their parents*, yea in all lawfull and necessary things, though their pare[n]ts also be poore; because such children make conscience of the Commandement of honouring their parents. Let children follow this example: *Ruth* was but a daughter in law, yet see her grace and humility, which the Lord rewarded unto her. Which justly condemneth the sawcinesse of children in law in these dayes, who thinke no duety to be due to father or mother in law, especially if they be poore, as was *Naomi* here. But what speake I of children in law? I wish that a just complaint might not be taken up against such as by nature owe themselves unto their parents. Are there not *Dinah*-like daughters, which will follow their delights till they returne home with shame?<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Demas's desertion of Paul is mentioned in 2 Tim. 4.10.

<sup>26</sup> In observing that Ruth sought Naomi's permission because going gleanng required her to go abroad, Bernard introduces a concern he shares with the two earlier commentators regarding the episode of Ruth's gleanng; that is, the danger posed to a woman's chastity if she enters company in which men are present (see the Introduction section 6.2 for this danger). This anxiety can be seen to reflect unease at Ruth's unconventional resourcefulness which might have had such dangerous consequences.

<sup>27</sup> The example of Dinah (Gen. 34) recurs in the analyses of Chapter 2 by Lavater, Topsell and Bernard. Although Bernard's mention of Dinah here could be read to indicate that he regarded her as in some degree a consenting partner with Shechem rather than a victim of rape, his subsequent remarks focus on the dangers of her situation rather than on any fault in sexual conduct he sees in her (163, 239). Furthermore, Lavater and Topsell similarly do not express disapproval of Dinah. Lavater warns 'straunge' widows of the possibility that if they venture away from home they may be ravished like Dinah (52r). Topsell derives from Naomi's approving at the end of the chapter that Ruth should stay with Boaz's maidens the lesson that women should not work unaccompanied since they may be



Doe not many marry as their lust doth leade, without any respect to their parents, like the wanton sonnes before the floud <Gen. 6<sup>28</sup>>? I wish the seed of *Esaus* were not among us, which vexe their parents.<sup>29</sup> Children will seeke to be nourished [p. 134] of their parents when they are yong, or when they be in need. But if parents have need of them, Ah how unnaturall be they! Will they like a *Ruth* willingly labour for them? Or will they not rather despise them, and get from them, and labour for others?<sup>30</sup> A strange Masters commandement shall be obeyed, when a word from poore parents will make stubborne children the more disobedient: But let children know and remember the Law against a stubborne sonne, Deut. 21.18,<sup>31</sup> and the curse which is threatned against such as despise their parents <Deut. 27.16; Prov. 30.17>, that they may feare and tremble, and doe no more so wickedly.

*And gleane eares of corne after him.] Ruth* asketh not leave to runne abroad to see others, or to be seene, to see the countrey, to get acquaintance, to goe to Wakes,<sup>32</sup> Revels,<sup>33</sup> May-games,<sup>34</sup> Morris-dauncings,<sup>35</sup> and such heathenish vanities practised

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conquered: after all, Topsell points out that Dinah was ravished by Shechem while working alone (150). It would appear that Bernard borrowed the example of Dinah and his later interpretation of it from Lavater and possibly Topsell. This first instance of his reference to Dinah can be read most probably as consistent with the later ones but does seem to indicate that Bernard thought that she, like some women in his society, escaped parental control.

<sup>28</sup> Specifically, verse 2.

<sup>29</sup> Bernard's reiteration (see especially pp. 26-7) of the view common to contemporary casuists, that parents should consent to the marriages of their children, indicates the importance he attaches to parental guidance as a foundation for stable marriages (see p. 244).

<sup>30</sup> Bernard diverts his attention from his argument about filial obedience to draw attention to filial ingratitude, contrasting with the example of Ruth, and contributing to social problems in his own more sophisticated society.

<sup>31</sup> Verses 19-21 are also relevant.

<sup>32</sup> 'wake': 'occas. in *pl.*, nocturnal revels.' (OEDO).

<sup>33</sup> 'revel': 'An occasion or course of merry-making or noisy festivity, with dancing, games, masking, acting, or other forms of lively entertainment.' *spec.* A parish festival or feast; a fair. App. limited to the south-western counties.' (OEDO). This definition applies here as Bernard ministered in Somerset, a south-western county.

<sup>34</sup> 'May game': 'In *pl.* The merrymaking and sports associated with May celebrations.' (OEDO).

<sup>35</sup> 'morris dance': 'A lively traditional English dance performed in formation by a group of dancers in a distinctive costume (usually wearing bells and ribbons and carrying handkerchiefs or sticks, to emphasize the rhythm and movement), often accompanied by a character who generally represents a symbolic or legendary figure (as the Fool, Hobby Horse, Maid Marian, etc.); any of a repertoire of

too commonly heere, but not knowne among the ancient people of God.<sup>36</sup> No, no, *Ruth* desireth to goe to labour for her living, and to helpe also her poore old mother in law, yea shee was not ashamed to goe to gleane; though shee had beene the wife of one so well descended, shee scorneth not honest labour:<sup>37</sup> For *honest minds will stoupe to base meanes* (in proud persons conceits<sup>38</sup>) *so they be honest to relieve their wants in their poore estate*. *Moses* will not stand upon his education, the gifts of his mind, and singular learning in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, but will be content to keepe *Jethroes* sheep in his need;<sup>39</sup> so will *Paul* worke with his hands, and make tents to maintaine himselfe,<sup>40</sup> [p. 135] though he was brought up as a Scholler under learned *Gamaliel*.<sup>41</sup> The humilitie of these is to be followed, as praise-worthy for their vertue and pietie<sup>42</sup> herein. It is no shame to labour when men are brought low, whatsoever they be by birth, as they call it, and by their first education: The godly never stood upon these tearmes, as many now doe, who brag of their Gentry, and yet are not ashamed to goe a begging, or hang upon their richer kindred, till they be weary of them, or will runne into dishonest courses, and all this forsooth because they hold labour a disgrace; worke they cannot, they will not; but it is no shame for them to live dishonestly, and idly, contrary to nature, contrary to Gods injunction, that men should labour, contrary to the practice of all the godly, and the example of

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such dances. Hence: any mumming performance of which such dancing is an important feature (now *rare*). Also: a representation of this dance' (OEDO).

<sup>36</sup> Bernard's objection to these festivities illustrates Puritan hostility to traditions coming from a pagan past.

<sup>37</sup> Bernard follows Lavater (52r, 52v) and Topsell (97, 98) in commending Ruth for her willingness to undertake labour which they describe, respectively, as honest and base.

<sup>38</sup> 'conceit': 'Personal opinion, judgement, or estimation, usually "in a neutral sense" (J.), as *in my conceit*, in my opinion or conception of the case.' (OEDO).

<sup>39</sup> See Exod. 3.1.

<sup>40</sup> See 1 Cor. 4.12; Acts 18.3.

<sup>41</sup> See Acts 5.34; 22.3.

<sup>42</sup> Topsell attributes Ruth's willingness to undertake base labour to her religion (97). Bernard here also sees such labour as indicative of piety.

Christ himselfe, who wrought in a handie-craft, as may be gathered by the words out of the Evangelist <Mark 6<sup>43</sup>>, and in that it was said, *He went home and was obedient unto his parents.*<sup>44</sup> Note further how *the truly-religious will not live idly*. This we may see in *Ruth* here, and in *Jacob*, and others; for they make conscience of the losse of time. Let him or they whosoever, which thinke themselves religious indeed, make conscience to take paines in some calling, and beware of living idly. What if they can say, they have outward meanes enough for themselves to live upon? Yet they are not to live idly, because idlenesse is a great sinne, the nurse of all vice, as we see in those that live idly, they are made the devils instruments to all villanie; neither is it [p. 136] enough that a man can maintaine himselfe, and be chargeable to none, but he must live to doe good to others, as the Apostle teacheth <Eph. 4.28>.

Lastly, observe that *gleaning*, as now, so then, *was a lawfull meanes for the poore to get corne for food*; as we may read in the Bookes of *Moses* <Lev. 19.9<sup>45</sup> and 23.22; Deut. 24.19>. And thus the Lord shewed his care for the poore, and also taught the rich in the midst of Gods mercy, and bounty toward them, to be mindfull of the needie brethren, and [n]ot to forget them. The rich therefore must give the poore leave to gleane; they may not drive them out of the field, neither may they gleane up their lands themselves <Lev. 19.9>, and so rob the poore of their due, which is the scatterings of Gods mercy towards them. And here let the poore honestly take this libertie to gleane, but first let them aske leave of the owner, as *Ruth* did, verse 7, then also to acknowledge it a favour, as shee did.<sup>46</sup> Thirdly, to gather the scattered eares, and not to cut off the eares of standing corne <Deut.

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<sup>43</sup> Specifically, verse 3.

<sup>44</sup> A paraphrase of Luke 2.51.

<sup>45</sup> Verse 10 is also relevant.

<sup>46</sup> In insisting on the poor seeking permission to glean, Bernard reinforces social hierarchy and follows Lavater (58v) and Topsell (99-100).

23.24-5>, nor to steale whole sheaves, or out of shockes, as many theevish people doe, to the hurt of their owne soules, and the hardening of mens hearts against themselves, and other poore people more honest then they.<sup>47</sup>

*In whose sight I shall find favour.*] So she went, but as unacquainted: Shee had libertie to gleane by Law; yet shee speaketh as one that would gleane with leave, and as shee that had hope to find favour somewhere, though shee knew not of whom to expect it in particular. Thus shee goeth, as we say, at random, or at adventure,<sup>48</sup> but God, [p. 137] as he had decreed, so he directed her by the hand of his providence, whither shee should goe.

One thing note here, that *the godly, in using lawfull meanes to live, hope to find favour with one or other for their reliefe*; this *Ruth's* words here doe shew as much. For they trust in God, who hath the hearts of men in his hand to encline them, as he pleaseth,<sup>49</sup> as he did *Boaz* towards *Ruth*, and who also hath promised his helpe to those, which using lawfull meanes, do depend upon him <Ps. 37.3<sup>50</sup>>. And therefore in doing our part, and using the meanes, let us in our wants hope well: let us not doubt, but that he will blesse our labours.

*And shee said unto her, Goe, my daughter.*] See here how meekely and lovingly this good old *Naomi* answereth: no doubt but it rejoyced her heart, to see her so willing to take paines, whom shee, perhaps, would have beene loth to have

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<sup>47</sup> Bernard here seems to be wrestling with the perception that Ruth in her gleaning took liberties which he held to be wrong – taking from sheaves and, implicit in the biblical reference to Deut. 23.24-5, taking away produce (see p. 209) – although the biblical narrative makes it clear that Ruth did these things with permission. He may have been conscious of the comments of earlier commentators, notably Topsell, on Ruth's gleaning privileges. Topsell's and others' comments are editorially noted where Bernard expounds the bailiff's report to Boaz in verse 7 (p. 154) that Ruth requested to glean among the sheaves. The issue of Bernard's concern at Ruth's infringement of gleaning custom will be returned to at the point where Boaz permitted Ruth her gleaning privilege of gleaning among the sheaves (p. 205).

<sup>48</sup> 'at adventure': 'At hazard, at random, recklessly' (OEDO).

<sup>49</sup> Bernard returns to this concept which he introduced on p. 19.

<sup>50</sup> Verses 34 and 39-40 are also relevant.

pressed to such a meane businesse.<sup>51</sup> We may note, that *requests are to be graunted of parents, unto children, when they be lawfull and fit.*<sup>52</sup> As *Job* did to his children to feast together;<sup>53</sup> *David* to *Amnon* his request to have *Tamar* sent to dresse meate for him <2 Sam. 13<sup>54</sup>>, though yet villanie was in *Amnons* heart;<sup>55</sup> but the request was resonable, and therefore yeelded unto of *David*: so was *Absaloms* desiring to goe to Hebron (as he pretended) to pay his vow, which he had made unto God.<sup>56</sup> *Caleb* also graunted his daughter her request <Josh. 15.19>; and *Naomi Ruths* here; which is to be followed of loving parents; but yet withall with deliberate consideration of the reasons, upon which the request is made, lest a *David* [p. 138] be deluded, and wickednesse be committed, by an outrageous *Amnon*.<sup>57</sup> Another thing may bee observed, which is this, that *a meek and loving spirit giveth a meeke and a loving answer.* *Naomi* saith not, Goe, as a sturdy<sup>58</sup> speech; but, Goe, my Daughter, for shee was not of a sturdy,<sup>59</sup> proud and impatient spirit, of which a rough and churlish speech is a signe. And therfore let us learne to answer meekely and lovingly, that we may not be justly censured for churlish natures, proud and impatient: good speech is very gracefull to others, and procureth love to our selves, as the contrary doth provoke unto wrath, as we see *Nabals* answer did unto *David*.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Topsell similarly observes that Ruth might have tarried long in Bethlehem ‘before her mother woulde have entreated her to so base a labour as gathering of barley’ (97). Such an observation is not found in Lavater’s exposition which reinforces the impression that Bernard was familiar with Topsell’s work.

<sup>52</sup> A similar guideline is found in Lavater (52r) but characteristically Bernard goes on to support it with biblical references.

<sup>53</sup> See Job 1.5.

<sup>54</sup> Specifically, verses 6-7.

<sup>55</sup> See 2 Sam. 13.4-5.

<sup>56</sup> See 2 Sam. 15.7-10.

<sup>57</sup> See 2 Sam. 13.11-14.

<sup>58</sup> ‘sturdy’: ‘Of or with regard to countenance, speech, demeanour: Stern, harsh, rough, surly.’ (OEDO).

<sup>59</sup> ‘sturdy’: ‘Hard to manage, intractable, refractory; rebellious, disobedient.’ (OEDO).

<sup>60</sup> See 1 Sam. 25. Bernard returns to the theme of his discussion here on pp. 292-3, where he declares the importance of speaking lovingly so that one is held to be loving. He goes on to assert the gladness of the poor at the apprehension of love in the mighty, and give examples of individuals who illustrate

Verse 3. *And shee went, and came and gleaned in the field after the Reapers; and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech.*

As *Ruth* craved leave and obtained it, so she now goeth abroad, and by Gods good providence lighteth on the field of *Boaz*. So as here is shewed what shee did abroad; shee gleaned: then how; after the Reapers: where it was; in *Boaz* field, who is here againe said to bee *Elimelechs* kinsman, that so the providence of God might herein more clearely appeare.

*And shee went, and came and gleaned in the field.*] Shee craved leave to goe, and when it was graunted her, shee accordingly went. *Honest motions*<sup>61</sup> and *intendments to well-doing are to bee put into [p. 139] practice*: else they bee nothing worth. *Paul* had a mind to visite the brethren, and so hee did <Acts 14<sup>62</sup>>; the prodigall sonne had a purpose to returne home, and hee returned; *Moses* thought of going out to visit his brethren, and so he did <Exod. 2<sup>63</sup>>. If motions be good, it is good to put them in execution, and that speedily, if cause so require, as *Ruth* doth here; and not to mind,<sup>64</sup> purpose, and will to doe well, and yet never to doe as they so purpose, losing the fruit of good thoughts. Againe, note from this, her bold adventure, and going forth in such perillous times, that *whom necessity moveth and*

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the point that if prominent people speak with love and respect they will be loved and honoured. Here too he points out the contrary reaction to rough speech. In these passages, Bernard develops Topsell's urging that a humble mind should speak kindly (109-110). His claim that good speech procures love also resembles his later statement that saluting procures love (145), and this may derive from Lavater's claim that saluting gives rise to goodwill (56v).

<sup>61</sup> 'motion': 'An inner prompting or impulse; instigation or incitement from within; a desire or inclination (*to* or *towards*).'  
(OEDO).

<sup>62</sup> The correct reference is Acts 15.36, 41.

<sup>63</sup> Specifically, verse 11.

<sup>64</sup> 'mind': 'to have a mind *to* do something; to wish, be inclined, purpose, intend *to* do something.'  
(OEDO).

*confidence in God encourageth, they doe feare no danger.* Ruth went abroad among strangers, shee was a stranger and a young woman, yet trusting in God, and being urged of necessity to use honest meanes to live, shee feared no perill, though in those dayes every one did what they listed, because there was then no King in Israel <Judg. 18<sup>65</sup>>.<sup>66</sup> Of such an undaunted spirit was *Ehud*, in setting upon *Eglon*;<sup>67</sup> *Gideon*, in destroying *Baals* altar;<sup>68</sup> *Eliah*, in seeing the face of *Achab*;<sup>69</sup> and *Michaiah*, in telling the truth before 2 Kings, contrary to the word of 400 false prophets.<sup>70</sup> For when men have faith in God, when the duty of their calling warranteth them, they grow couragious and bold, and doe put on a resolution without feare. Therefore in our affaires to remove feare, let us have an honest calling to that which wee goe about, and have confidence in God, who is able and will stand by to helpe us.

*After the Reapers.]* Shee followed such as cut [p. 140] up the standing corne; she thrust not her selfe in before, or among them, as an impudent bold housewife; but followed after them, to gather up the scattered eares, which they did leave,<sup>71</sup> and neither this did shee, neither without leave, see verse 7,<sup>72</sup> all making to the

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<sup>65</sup> Specifically, verse 1.

<sup>66</sup> Bernard feels compelled to draw attention to the dangers he sees in Ruth's enterprise. See the Introduction section 6.2.

<sup>67</sup> See Judg. 3.15-26.

<sup>68</sup> See Judg. 6.25-28.

<sup>69</sup> See 1 Kings 18.15-17.

<sup>70</sup> See 1 Kings 22, 2 Chron. 18.

<sup>71</sup> In drawing attention to Ruth's modest manner of gleaning, Bernard echoes the medieval Jewish commentator, Rashi (see the Introduction section 6.2). Bernard's mention of Ruth's gathering the scattered ears left behind is reminiscent of part of Rashi's exposition which is not related by the medieval Christian commentator Nicholas of Lyra in his report of the Jewish commentary on Ruth's modesty in her manner of gleaning (for Nicholas of Lyra, see [MET](#) 60). This suggests that Bernard may have been familiar with Rashi's own commentary. Bernard's observation that Ruth did not thrust herself in before or among the reapers, and his similar comment on verse 14 (p. 198), also echo Lavater (see the Introduction section 6.2).

<sup>72</sup> The fact that Bernard repeats his observation that Ruth asked leave to glean, according to verse 7, (see also p. 136) indicates that he welcomed every opportunity to draw attention to her conventional conduct.

commendation of the honesty, modestie, humility, and good behaviour of this vertuous young woman, that her example might be for others to imitate.

*And her hap was.*] That is, though shee went at unawares,<sup>73</sup> making choise of no place, but where shee should find favour, yet shee light well, by Gods good providence; which is here to be understood in her good hap: which word is spoken according to men; when things fall out besides a mans purpose, or otherwise than was intended, and whereof a man is ignorant, before the thing come to passe, then it is counted hap,<sup>74</sup> or lucke, or as the Heathen<sup>75</sup> used to speake, fortune<sup>76</sup> <Deut. 19.4>. *It is not unlawfull to speake according to men thus, It happened, It chanced, It was my luck* <Luke 10.31>, so it be we understand thereby, that which happeneth beyond our purpose and expectation, but yet guided by Gods hand and providence <Matt. 10.29-30; Acts 27.34>, and also that wee know and hold no meere chance, and fortune, as the Heathen have imagined, without the hand of God acknowledged therein, as the idolatrous priests, and diviners<sup>77</sup> of the Philistims [sic] once spoke <1 Sam. 6.9>; if wee understanding our selves in this wise, there is no scruple to be made of speaking, as aforesaid; alwaies excepting in cleare case, where the apparent hand of God is seene: [p. 141] for thus offended the Philistines.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>73</sup> 'at unawares': 'Without being aware; unconsciously; inadvertently; unintentionally.' (OEDO).

<sup>74</sup> 'hap': 'Absence of design or intent in relation to a particular event; fortuity; chance or fortune, considered as the cause or determiner of events' (OEDO).

<sup>75</sup> 'heathen': *transf.* One that has no more religion, enlightenment, or culture than a pagan.' (OEDO). Bernard evidently refers to the Romans, whose Goddess of chance and luck was called Fortuna (For 'Fortuna' see OEDO definition of 'fortune' below).

<sup>76</sup> 'fortune': 'Chance, hap, or luck, regarded as a cause of events and changes in men's affairs. Often (after Latin) personified as a goddess, "the power supposed to distribute the lots of life according to her own humour" (J.); her emblem is a wheel, betokening vicissitude.' (OEDO).

<sup>77</sup> 'diviner': 'One who practises divination; a soothsayer, prophet, seer; a magician, sorcerer.' (OEDO).

<sup>78</sup> See 1 Sam. 7.10-14. Bernard's attribution of events to God's providence is particularly evident in this passage and the one following (141). See the Introduction section 3.



*To light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz.] God doth so governe mens actions, as things fall out beyond expectation as they were to be wished. See it in the successe of Abrahams servant, sent to fetch a wife for Isaac <Gen. 24>: in Eliah his comming to the poore widdow of Sarepta in a most fit houre;<sup>79</sup> and in Sauls comming into the Cave where David and his men were; by which, David tooke occasion to cleare his innocency to Saul, which otherwise could never have beene so well demonstrated.<sup>80</sup> And this God doth, as foreknowing, and determining every thing, and ruling the same by the hand of his providence, as himselfe hath determined to bring things to passe. This should make us to rely upon Gods providence, as Abraham did in that thing, which was to his servant uncertaine <Gen. 24.7>, and also to acknowledge his providence in every thing, in a worke of mercy to be thankfull, and in any other triall to learne patience. Note again hence, that God will prosperously direct the well-minded, which will use honest meanes to relieve themselves. So hath he promised, Ps. 37.3, for their way is well pleasing to God, in such a course and case.<sup>81</sup> Let us therefore depend on God, and use honest meanes to sustaine our wants: so shall we assuredly have experience of Gods goodnesse towards us.*

*Who was of the kindred of Elimelech.] These words are againe mentioned, to shew that it was the same Boaz, mentioned before, and also to shew why Ruth had so quickly obtained leave [p. 142] to gleane there, and why Boaz did so much respect her afterwards, and that of a suddaine, upon so small acquaintance, and to give us to*

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<sup>79</sup> See 1 Kings 17. In the Authorised Version, 'Sarepta' is given in its Hebrew version, 'Zarephath'.

<sup>80</sup> See 1 Sam. 24.

<sup>81</sup> Bernard makes a similar point on p. 137 with the same biblical reference to support it. As editorially indicated there, verses 34 and 39-40 are also relevant. In the present instance, verses 27, 29 are relevant too. The fact that Bernard repeats himself indicates the importance he attaches to this point.

know, what a way hereby was made to further the Lords intendment in matching *Boaz* with this *Ruth*, *Elimelechs* daughter in law, and the wife once of *Mahlon*, one of his sonnes, which being dead, the next kinsman was to raise up the name of the dead, and to take the widdow for his wife, so that *Elimelech* might not want one for his inheritance amongst Gods people.<sup>82</sup>

Verse 4. *And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the Reapers, The Lord bee with you. And they answered him, The Lord blesse thee.*

God bringeth *Ruth* by his hand into *Boaz* field, and then he by the same hand draweth *Boaz* to come thither while shee was there, that so the one might be knowne to the other; that by seeing and liking, the match might bee made, which God in his mercy intended for his daughter, this young woman.<sup>83</sup> Here in this verse is *Boaz* going into the field to his Reapers; then his saluting of them, and their re-saluting of him.

*And behold.*] This is used to set out a remarkeable thing <Chapter 4.1>, and is here, as if it had beene said, Take notice of Gods providence herein, as a thing worthy observation, that *Boaz* should now come into the field, at this time, unto his

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<sup>82</sup> Bernard does not comment here on the compatibility of this obligation of the next kinsman to marry the widow and the levirate law as set out in Deut. 25.5, where a brother is referred to. He does specify that a brother is referred to in the Deuteronomy passage in his explanation of Naomi's allusion to sons of hers which could be husbands for Ruth and Orpah (63). He addresses the question in Chapter 4 (377). The fact that Bernard refers to Elimelech's rather than Mahlon's inheritance amongst God's people may reflect his critical consciousness that Elimelech's sons did not return to take up adult life in Judah.

<sup>83</sup> Here, Bernard draws attention to the fact that the marriage sought on the grounds of kinship was between a man and a woman who were attracted to each other. This perception provides a motive for Naomi's suggesting that Ruth approach Boaz in Chapter 3; that is, not simply to fulfil the law but for Ruth to obtain a husband she desired. Bernard's comments in his analysis of Chapter 3 evaluate the morality of Ruth's enactment of Naomi's plan, albeit that he mentions Boaz's wealth as the attraction (269).

Reapers, and [p. 143] in willing the Reader to behold this, wee may learne, That *the provident hand of God is in all things to be diligently marked and observed*. For hereby we shall see God in every thing, and so acknowledge his ruling hand in and over all; wee shall see his favour and helpe in delivering his children and servants, as he did *David* from *Saul* <1 Sam. 23.26-7>; in furthering them to their honour and welfare, as here *Ruth*; and so *Mordecai*, when the King must, in reading, light upon that place in his Chronicles, which concerned him <Esth. 6>. Wee shall then hereby see his wrath against the wicked, in bringing *Jezabel* to *Jezreel*, with *Jehoram* and *Ahaziah*, to cut off at once the house of *Ahab*, as he had threatned <2 Kings 8.29 and 9.15-16<sup>84</sup>>. Let us then observe wisely the hand of Gods providence, that he may have the glory in all things, when we see his rule and power either in his workes of mercy, or workes of judgement.

*Boaz came from Bethlehem,*] unto his Reapers, who were reaping in his field, and so like a good husband<sup>85</sup> would have an eye unto them: for *good housholders do oversee the affaires of their house and family, and such also as they set on worke*. 2 Kings 4.8, 18.<sup>86</sup> The Shunamite would bee with his Reapers, as *Boaz* was here. This is *Salomons* counsell, Prov. 27.23. And the praise of a good housewife also is, to looke well to the waies of her household <Prov. 31.27>, because riches are uncertaine, Prov. 27.24, they abide not for ever: and it is no lesse a vertue to keepe what we have gotten, then to get what wee had not <*Non minor est virtus, quam quaerere, parta tueri*.<sup>87</sup>>. Carefull vigilancy over our family is a [p. 144] good means to preserve our estate: by this shal we see, who is faithfull and painfull, to

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<sup>84</sup> All of 2 Kings 9 is relevant; verses 30-37 relate the killing of Jezebel.

<sup>85</sup> ‘Good husband’: ‘One who manages his affairs with skill and thrift; a saving, frugal, or provident man; an economist.’ (OEDO).

<sup>86</sup> Verse 8 does not seem to be relevant.

<sup>87</sup> Bernard translates this Roman maxim in his text.

commend and reward them, and who is negligent and faithlesse to reprove and correct them, or else to remove them. Let us therefore learne to play the good husbands, as men say; for it is no fault for a man to be thriving, or for the greatest to looke well to their charge: if any fault be, it is in covetousnes, and niggardlinesse,<sup>88</sup> and not in provident circumspection, and in a watchfull eye over the family, to keepe them in honest labour, and to prevent wastfulness. Negligent masters in this point are worthy reproofe, they spoyle their servants, they undoe themselves. And here such must know themselves to bee in an error, who thinke it a disgrace for men of worth, to see to their servants, and to be among their workemen. Indeede, if servants were like unto *Jacob*, faithfull and painfull, or like *Joseph* to be trusted with all that men have <Gen. 31[.]38-40 and 39.23>, or like the faithfull workemen in *Joash*, and *Josias* daies; the eye of the master might be spared <2 Kings 12.15 and 22.7>: but many servants be rather like false *Zibah*,<sup>89</sup> filching *Onesimus*, before his conversion;<sup>90</sup> riotous, like those in Matt. 24.49 or Run-awaies, like *Shemeies* servants,<sup>91</sup> so that masters had neede to see to them: yet must masters beware of a greedy mind, as thinking that servants never doe enough: they must take heede of distrustfull mindes, without just cause, charity thinketh no ill; neither must they keepe their servants to worke so hardly, as that they cannot afford them any time to serve God: for such masters are more [p. 145] like Turkes<sup>92</sup> than Christians, and use their servants rather like beasts, than like men, endued with reason, and having

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<sup>88</sup> 'niggardliness': 'The state or quality of being niggardly; stinginess, meanness; parsimony.' (OEDO).

<sup>89</sup> See 2 Sam. 19.26-7.

<sup>90</sup> See Philem. 1.10-18.

<sup>91</sup> The running away of Shimei's servants is related in 1 Kings 2.39.

<sup>92</sup> 'Turk': '*transf.* a. Applied to any one having qualities attributed to the Turks; a cruel, rigorous, or tyrannical man; any one behaving as a barbarian or savage; one who treats his wife hardly; a bad-tempered or unmanageable man. Often, with alliterative qualification, *terrible Turk*; *young* or *little Turk*, an unmanageable or violent child or youth.' (OEDO).

soules to save. If Masters take time also for the soule, and for the service of God, and then be provident for the world, it is praiseworthy, and the fruit thereof will appeare in Gods blessing falling upon the worke of their hands.<sup>93</sup>

*And said unto the Reapers, The Lord bee with you.*]<sup>94</sup> Thus *Boaz* speaketh to them, when he commeth into the field; this was his manner of saluting them, and likewise of their resaluting him againe <Judg. 6.12<sup>95</sup>>; so that the forme of saluting is not one and the same, as wee may see in Ps. 129.8;<sup>96</sup> Matt. 26.49; Josh. 20.26.<sup>97</sup> Now, salutations are not onely words of courteous and civill behaviour, but prayers made unto God one for another;<sup>98</sup> and therefore wee may hence learne,

<sup>93</sup> Bernard's discussion of the importance of masters overseeing their servants extends those of Lavater (57r-57v) and Topsell (101-2). In particular, Bernard draws more on the Bible than the earlier commentators, and points out the duty of masters to show consideration for servants. Lavater makes the related point that householders should feed their servants properly (74r-74v) but Bernard integrates his views on masters' responsibilities. Regarding Bernard's emphasis on masters' concerning themselves with the religious development of servants, see the Introduction section 3.

<sup>94</sup> In engaging with the subject of saluting Bernard is again engaging with the threat he evidently perceives in the Anabaptists (see the Introduction section 3), countering their opposition to saluting (see also p. 98, where he follows Lavater). In doing so, he follows both Lavater (56r-56v) and Topsell (105-6), although the latter does not mention the Anabaptists by name. All three commentators address a wide range of issues relating to saluting (Lavater 55r-57r, Topsell 102-6). Lavater, especially, illustrates his discussion with biblical references, some of which are used by Bernard. Topsell raises issues which are not taken up by Bernard. In particular, he is concerned in case the individual saluting does not himself receive the blessing of God since he swears blasphemously (102-3). He also warns that those saluting may be accused of puritanism (103). The early modern commentators develop the observations on saluting in the medieval Jewish and Christian commentaries on the book of Ruth. The medieval Christian interpretation includes the allegorical or mystical sense (given by Hugh of St. Cher, see MET 49).

<sup>95</sup> This biblical reference is used in the earlier commentaries on the book of Ruth to illustrate saluting. The medieval Jewish commentator, Salmon ben Yeroham, alludes to it (BJE 61), and the medieval Christian commentator, Hugh of St. Cher cites it in his literal sense (MET 43). Lavater also mentions it (56r) although Topsell does not. Bernard's discussion is thus grounded in tradition.

<sup>96</sup> Bernard may here be showing an awareness of Salmon ben Yeroham's quotation of Ps. 129.8 as the manner of greeting for reapers (BJE 62).

<sup>97</sup> 'Josh.' is a misprint for 'John'.

<sup>98</sup> In making the point that salutations are prayers and developing it in II below (146-7) and regarding the reapers' response in the following lemma, Bernard is building on Topsell's interpretation: 'he [Boaz] prayeth for the labourers, in this his godly salutation, for he wisheth the presence of God to be with them' (102). Topsell indicates the deficiency of those salutations which 'are but mere customary speeches, proceeding of the usage & manner of men, not of the spirit or religion of the faithful' (103). In expressing the reason why men should salute those they meet and pray for the success of workmen (that is, God's role in the outcome of their endeavours), Topsell anticipates Bernard's statement of God's assistance to man in II (where this is presented as why masters should pray that God may be with their households). Like Bernard, Topsell draws on and cites Ps. 127, including an allusion to verse 2 (103). However, Bernard additionally names other biblical examples.

I. That *it is a commendable thing for one to salute another when they meete.*

This our God and Saviour did: this Angels have done, and this we see good men have done <John 20.26; Judg. 6.12; Luke 1.28>.<sup>99</sup> It is among men civility and courtesie, especially of the superiour to the inferiour, as here:<sup>100</sup> it also procureth love; as wee may see in *Absaloms* courteous saluting the people, by which hee stole away their hearts after him;<sup>101</sup> but this was the abuse of this commendable practice: wee must beware of hypocrisie therein: we must not salute like *Judas*; not like *Joab*, with faire words, and foule hearts and hands <Matt. 26.49; 2 Sam. 20.10<sup>102</sup>>;<sup>103</sup> neither must any neglect this, of pride and contempt of others, as too many now doe. If this be commendable, then surely the Anabaptists do erre, [p. 146] who hold it unlawfull to salute such as they meet, ob[je]cting certaine places of Scripture, as 2 Kings 4.29, where the Prophet commandeth his servant not to salute, or resalute any that hee met. But this place is to be understood, onely to expresse the haste he should make, as the commandement to gird up his loynes, doth shew: It doth not simply forbid to salute any, at all other occasions, or times. Another place is in Luke 10.4, where our Saviour Christ forbiddeth his Apostles to salute any man by the way. Neither is here

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<sup>99</sup> New Testament examples of saluting occur in the medieval and previous early modern Christian commentaries. In particular, the angel's salutation of the Virgin Mary in Luke 1.28 is mentioned by Hugh of St. Cher in his allegorical or mystical sense (*MET* 49) and by Lavater (56v) and Topsell (102). Christ's saluting of his disciples (John 20.19, 26) also recurs in the Christian commentaries.

<sup>100</sup> Topsell similarly notes the duty of superiors to salute or speak to their inferiors, although he observes that this duty is neglected by some gentlemen and yeomen (104). In following up his comment by denouncing failure to salute, Topsell again provides a precedent for Bernard, who draws attention below to many people neglecting to salute because of pride and contempt. The commentators' observations reflect the different hierarchical assumptions in their society of themselves as clergymen and those individuals above the lowest levels of society whom they criticised.

<sup>101</sup> See 2 Sam. 15.5-6.

<sup>102</sup> Verse 9 is also relevant.

<sup>103</sup> Concern that salutation should not be hypocritical occurs in both Lavater and Topsell. Lavater provides the basis of Bernard's remarks on the subject, pointing out that saluting gives rise to goodwill and declaring that it should not be done hypocritically (56v). Topsell draws attention to men who make insincere salutations (103). Bernard's contribution is to provide biblical examples as illustrations.

forbidden to salute any: for in verse 5 hee teacheth them to salute others. But this speech was, to shew that they should make speede in that whereabout they were sent, and to avoid the least hinderance that might stay them from performance of their duty: for by saluting one another, sometimes occasions are taken of staying, which here he seemeth to have relation unto, and not that hee would have them neglect common, and commendable courtesies. The third place is 2 John verse 10 where hee forbids to bid God speede to some: which is to be understood, of not allowing of such as were Heretickes and false teachers, as farre forth as they were such, and therein not to wish them prosperity; which is nothing to ordinary salutations.<sup>104</sup>

II. That *Masters are to pray that God may be with their household, family, and workemen*. So doth *Boaz* here pray; and there is good reason for it: for if God be with them, they shall prosper, as did *Jacob*, and *Joseph* in their services, and *Abraham* [p. 147] *hams* servant in his businesse. It is hee that giveth them strength to labour, and without his blessing nothing can goe forward: for hee giveth power to get wealth <Ps. 127.2; Deut. 8.18>. And therefore let Masters remember this duty to God for their family and servants.<sup>105</sup>

*And they answered him, The Lord blesse thee.*] Thus they religiously salute him againe: So as *they which doe salute, are to be re-saluted*.<sup>106</sup> The Scripture

<sup>104</sup> Bernard adds to the refutations by Lavater (of the Anabaptist argument from Christ's instruction to his disciples) and by Topsell (of this argument and their argument from Elisha's instruction to his servant) a further attack, on the Anabaptists' interpretation of John's command. His own contribution is also evident in his drawing attention to Christ's later telling his disciples to make a salutation on entering a house. Bernard's rebuttal is thus more comprehensive.

<sup>105</sup> In this passage, Bernard provides more biblical illustrations of God's assistance to man than Topsell in his comparable passage, which is dominated by Ps. 127 (Topsell 103).

<sup>106</sup> This principle is also expressed by Topsell in his exposition of the reapers' reply (105). Although Bernard below notes that prayer for the master is made here, the fact that he immediately focuses on manners suggests that he is diverging from Topsell's overriding emphasis on the return of a salute by inferiors as prayer.

teacheth humanity,<sup>107</sup> and commendeth the same to us in godly mens practice; as here in saluting one another, so in comely<sup>108</sup> gesture in reverencing our betters, as *Abigail*<sup>109</sup> did *David*,<sup>110</sup> and *Joseph Jacob* <Gen. 48.12>. Indeed the Scripture, besides other things is a schoole of good manners, and therefore checketh such as be uncivill in their carriage and behaviour, when civility and good manners are a grace to a Christian profession. Againe note, that *servants are to pray for a blessing upon their Masters*. It is a rare grace to play the part of an *Abrahams* servant <Gen. 24<sup>111</sup>>. But thus to doe, argueth true love in a Servant: and if a Master be blessed, he is the better inabled to doe for a good servant. But where are such servants now to bee found?<sup>112</sup>

Verse 5. *Then said Boaz unto his servant, that was set over the Reapers, Whose Damosell is this?*

This is an enquiry after the young woman. Wherein is to be observed, who maketh the demand, of whom hee enquireth, and concer- [p. 148] ning whom the demand was made.

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<sup>107</sup> 'Humanity': 'Civility, courtesy, politeness, good behaviour; kindness as shown in courteous or friendly acts, obligingness' (*OEDO*). Lavater makes the observation: 'It is a poynt both of curtesie and of humanitie to salute others, and to pray for them.' (56v). The anonymous, medieval, Jewish Rabbi comments on Boaz's salute that the Jewish teachers have used it as an example of good manners, although this is not the simple meaning (Beattie 120-1). Bernard follows this interpretation in his emphasis on the humanity of Boaz and, here as elsewhere, draws attention to further scriptural examples.

<sup>108</sup> 'Comely': 'Pleasing or agreeable to the moral sense, to notions of propriety, or æsthetic taste; becoming, decent, proper, seemly, decorous' (*OEDO*).

<sup>109</sup> A comma has been omitted here to clarify the sense.

<sup>110</sup> See 1 Sam. 25.23-4.

<sup>111</sup> Specifically, verse 12.

<sup>112</sup> Perhaps in deference to Topsell's views, Bernard ends his discussion of saluting by holding up as an example the prayer with which the reapers saluted Boaz.



*Then said Boaz.*] Hee no sooner came into the field, and had saluted his Reapers, but his eye was upon *Ruth*, of her hee tooke speciall notice, and demanded who shee was, and to whom shee did belong. Which sheweth a guiding power of God herein, and also that afore this time hee had not seene her. Old *Naomi* had not sent her, it may seeme, to his house, nor abroad to bee gazed upon, and yet was she famous for her vertues, Chapter 3.11, which will spread themselves abroad well enough, though the party in person be knowne to few.

*Unto his servant that was set over the reapers.*] *Boaz* had placed one as Overseer to the rest, and of this man doth he demand the question. Hence note, That *it is a point of wisdom in great families, to appoint an Overseer over the rest in the Masters absence.* Thus *Abraham* had *Eleazar* his Steward;<sup>113</sup> so had *Ahab* his *Obadiah*;<sup>114</sup> and here *Boaz* the Bailiffe<sup>115</sup> of his husbandrie: for Masters cannot alway be with their servants, and therefore it is necessary to have such a one, to set every one to their taske, to see what is done, to be done with diligence, and also well and orderly, and to prevent falsehood and deceit, as well as they can, and further to acquaint their Master with his affaires, with the paines and labour of such as be diligent, and contrarily to give notice of such as be not for his service, that so the one sort may be rewarded as they deserve, and the other put off, after their wages be paid them; for the hyre must not be kept backe, which a good [p. 149] Steward must have care of for his Masters credit, and his owne discharge. But yet here let masters in setting one over the rest, make a good choise, and see that the man be, First, wise and skilfull in that he undertaketh. Secondly, one diligent and painefull in his owne person. Thirdly, a man fearing God, as was *Abrahams* servant and *Ahabs* Steward:

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<sup>113</sup> Abraham states that Eliezer is the steward of his house in Gen. 15.2.

<sup>114</sup> See 1 Kings 18.3.

<sup>115</sup> 'Bailiff': 'one who superintends the husbandry of a farm for its owner or tenant' (OEDO).

For such a one will be honest towards his Master, carefull to make others religious, and so procure a blessing to the whole house. Such an one may be trusted, as *Potiphar* did *Joseph*;<sup>116</sup> and to such an one authoritie may be committed to command others, and to order matters among servants: but yet ever so, as that he be ready to give an account of his stewardship. Now also hence we may inferre, that if one may be set over another in a familie, then also in a Common-wealth; for without order of superiority and inferiority, no Common-wealth can stand <1 Chron. 27<sup>117</sup>>; which being true, overthroweth the Anabaptisticall Anarchie.<sup>118</sup> Moreover, in that the Overseer is asked concerning this damosell by *Boaz*, and not the rest, we learne, That *servants, who are betrusted with the care and charge of businesse, are to give account touching any thing or person within their charge*; to them the question is to be made, which will make such to looke to their charge, to be ready to answer according to the trust committed into their hands.<sup>119</sup>

*Whose damosell is this?*] This sheweth that *Ruth* was yet but yong, and therefore the more commendation to her, that came to be so famous for [p. 150] vertue:<sup>120</sup> And in that *Boaz* asketh not what, but whose damosel shee is; it giveth us

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<sup>116</sup> See Gen. 39.6.

<sup>117</sup> The chapter details the organisation of David's kingdom. It lists those in leadership roles.

<sup>118</sup> Anabaptists' beliefs were antithetical to Bernard's views on social order. In making his point he makes a similar comparison, between order in a family and a commonwealth, to that made by Lavater of order in an army and in a household (58r).

<sup>119</sup> In his discussion of the wisdom of appointing an overseer in the master's absence, Bernard addresses Lavater's and Topsell's (and, indeed, his own (RR 144)) reservations about servants' reliability. According to Lavater, 'Although a man hath good and trustie servauntes and bayliffes, yet the mayster being absent, they do all things the more negligently and carelesly' (57r). Lavater's subsequent approval of Boaz appointing a servant to oversee the reapers (57v-58r) is apparently conditional on Boaz himself superintending the work, but he does not specify in detail the relations between the servant and the master. Topsell, although he acknowledges the faithfulness of Boaz's overseer servant, does not commend such an appointment, and dwells on the damaging consequences for masters of leaving their affairs to their servants and stewards (101-2, 106). Bernard, in the present passage, sets out in some detail what the relations should be between the overseer servant and his master, and how the overseer servant should inform his master regarding his affairs (see the Introduction section 3).

<sup>120</sup> Bernard is again referring to Boaz's declaration in Ruth 3.11 that all the city knows Ruth to be a virtuous woman (see also p. 148) which suggests that this endorsement of Ruth as a good woman

to know, that he thought her to belong to some, as one of the maids of Israel, and that shee was not (as now vaine yong women desire to be) at their owne hand, which is the next way to lewdnesse and all loosnesse. Such Mistrislesse maids were not then, as now too common, which maketh them also to become common. An evill not sufferable in a well governed state, to have Masterlesse men or Mistrislesse women. It is fit to aske young people till they be marryed, Whose they be? to whom they belong? and whom they doe serve? Before I conclude this verse, another thing may be noted from *Boaz*: That *it is a wise part of a housholder, to knowe who they be which come to his house, or into his grounds or field, to take commoditie*<sup>121</sup> *by him*: as he doth here, finding her in his field with his reapers; lest a man give countenance to the unworthie: for men are to be mercifull, but yet in wisdom, because some are not to be relieved: Therefore let men well know to whom to give <2 Thess. 3<sup>122</sup>>.<sup>123</sup> In former times amongst us, men have beene commended for good housekeepers: but if their housekeeping were examined by Gods Word, we should find it nothing lesse then good housekeeping, but rather such houses were houses of riot, excesse, prodigality, gluttony, and drunkennes, suffering all sorts of idle lewd, and licencious Mates to come in to eate, drinke, card, dice, ryot, and revell under a Lord of misrule,<sup>124</sup> especially at Christmasse, a time pretended to be spent in joy and

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made a great impression on him. It may have particularly struck him because it occurs in Ruth Chapter 3, when her conduct is contrary to the norms of his society.

<sup>121</sup> 'Commodity': 'advantage, benefit, profit, interest: often in the sense of private or selfish interest' (OEDO).

<sup>122</sup> Specifically, verses 6, 10-15.

<sup>123</sup> Here, Bernard takes his opportunity to introduce his views on poor relief. His suggestion that Boaz's enquiring about Ruth's worthiness indicates that he was careful in doing good, echoes Topsell's position (Topsell 106).

<sup>124</sup> 'Lord of Misrule': 'A person (traditionally a man) chosen to preside over games and other revelry during the Christmas period (occas. at other times; cf. *summer-lord* n. at SUMMER n.<sup>1</sup> Compounds 2a), esp. in a wealthy household, at the Inns of Court, at Oxford and Cambridge colleges, and at civic entertainments. Now *hist.*

Reversal of roles was often an important aspect of such revelry, and so the person chosen was typically of low rank or status. For a fuller discussion of Lords of Misrule, and the festivities over which they presided, see R. Hutton *Stations of Sun* (1996) 95-111.' (OEDO).

rejoycing in the [p. 151] honor of Christ, but was indeed abused to his great dishonour, to the increase of sinne, and the pleasing of Satan.

Verse 6. *And the servant that was set over the Reapers, answered and said, It is the Moabitesse damosell that came backe with Naomi out of the countrey of Moab.*

The servants answer unto his Master briefly and fully. In which he here and in the next verse prayseth *Ruth* also. He telleth here what shee was, whence shee came, and with whom, and so sheweth whose shee was, and to whom shee did belong.

*And the servant that was set over the Reapers, answered and said.]* By this servants ready answer unto his Masters demand, it appeareth that he had made enquirie of her what she was. *Faithfull servants which have charge committed to them, should be able to answer to their Lord or Master, concerning any person or thing which fall within their charge, when the question is asked.* This doth argue the care and diligent circumspection which is to be used of all such as be put in trust, and it will commend their faithfulness and honestie: and the contrary sheweth faithlesnesse and dishonestie.

*It is the Moabitesse damosell that came backe with Naomi out of the countrey of Moab.]* This servant very briefly telleth to the full what shee was; and here it is not a bare declaration, but also a commendation of her, who being but a yong woman, would come with an olde poore woman from [p. 152] her owne countrey, into a strange land;<sup>125</sup> which indeed was a great praise to her, as I have afore

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<sup>125</sup> The servant's description of Ruth as being Moabite evidently prompts Bernard to later draw attention to Ruth's leaving her heathen acquaintance to live with God's people (153). However, at this point in the commentary, he does not draw attention to the question of how Ruth could marry

noted:<sup>126</sup> and if the servant spoke this, as some Learned thinke, in the way of commendation, wee may learne,

I. That *as the Master was a Lover of vertue, so was the man: so like happy Master, like happy man*. For as this praised her to the Master, as it better appeareth in the next verse; so the Master greatly commendeth her, after he tooke notice of her; by which the love of goodnesse in them both appeareth. Which may set out their happinesse: and on the contrary it is unhappinesse to an *Obadiah* to dwell with a wicked *Ahab*; or a *Jacob* with a *Laban*; so to an *Hezekiah* to have his *Shebna*;<sup>127</sup> or an honest *Mephibosheth*, his wicked *Zibah*.<sup>128</sup>

II. We may see, That *the godly and well-disposed will praise vertue in whomsoever they see it*, whether in strangers or home-borne, in poore or rich, noble or base persons, friend or foe, as *David* did in both *Saul*<sup>129</sup> and *Abner*.<sup>130</sup> because honest and vertuous minds love vertue truely in every one; they are not transported<sup>131</sup> with an ill-disposed heart, either through pride or envie, to disdaine, or maligne

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Boaz when he has condemned the marriages of Mahlon and Chilion on the grounds of their wives being Moabites. It may be that he does not do so because excessive emphasis on this would be too much against the ethos of *Ruth*. He is helped in this by the fact that Ruth was a convert, as he earlier (in chapter 1, p. 28) and later (in this chapter, p. 194, and in chapter 4, p. 401) notes. The issue of Ruth's foreignness is variously addressed in preceding commentaries. The medieval Jewish Anonymous Rabbi perceives Ruth's foreignness to have motivated Boaz's enquiry about Ruth. According to the Anonymous Rabbi, the servant was defensive about Ruth's foreignness in his response (BJE 121). Another medieval Jewish commentator, Abraham ibn Ezra, makes the less definite observation that Boaz may have asked about Ruth since she wore the dress of her own land (BJE 139). The medieval and early modern Christian commentaries, however, do not focus on the issue, although Lavater does observe that Boaz asked about Ruth because he saw that she was a stranger. However, he describes her as painstaking. Significantly, nevertheless, he later approves the servant not hating her or reproaching her because she was a stranger (57v, 58r). Thus, there may be a hint of the antipathy between the Jews and the Moabites in some of the earlier commentaries, which Bernard does not reflect at this point (or on the other occasion in chapter 2 when her draws attention to Ruth's nationality, pp. 193-4). He similarly only touches on the issue of the prohibition of Jews marrying Moabite women on a number of other occasions (pp. 371, 472).

<sup>126</sup> See p. 104.

<sup>127</sup> See Isa. 22.15-19.

<sup>128</sup> See 2 Sam. 16.1-4; 2 Sam. 19.24-8.

<sup>129</sup> See 2 Sam. 1.23.

<sup>130</sup> See 2 Sam. 3.38.

<sup>131</sup> 'transported': "'Carried away" by excitement or vehement emotion; excited beyond self-control; enraptured.' (OEDO).

graces in other, but to speake the truth, and to praise them for whatsoever is good in them. This marke of true love let us shew forth: this will preserve goodnesse and vertue in others, procure respect to our selves, and good favour to such of them as be poore, as we may see here from *Boaz* towards *Ruth*. This condemneth such First, as cannot praise other for well-doing: which ar- [p. 153] gueth pride, or envie, or malice, or all of them, and by which they shew too much selfe-love in themselves, and little love or none at all to their neighbour. Secondly, those which are so farre from praising men, as they lessen their vertues, and blazon their infirmities, and so seeke to disgrace them, contrary to true love and charitie; and yet a common evill in these dayes in most. Thirdly, those that will commend perhaps others, but not before better then themselves, not to the full, but with their Iffs and Ands, with words of exceptions, shewing plainly they be loth to give men their due, falsely supposing, the praises of other should derogate from themselves, and from their owne worth; so vainely jealous are we of our owne reputation.<sup>132</sup>

III. We may observe, that in praises, Religion is to have the first place: for here is *Ruth* set out, as one forsaking her heathenish acquaintance, to keepe company with a vertuous woman, and leaving her idolatrous countrey, for to dwell in Judah amongst Gods people; and thus is *Job* set forth and *Cornelius* <Job 1; Acts 10.2>: For Religion and Vertue is that which is in man most excellent, making him more then a man, for as much as he becomes a spirituall man of a carnall.<sup>133</sup> Therefore here let our commendations begin, and not dispraise men for profession of Religion: an argument of the want of Religion: nor judge them worthy commendations, which are altogether without Religion. True it is, that many may have such gifts of nature

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<sup>132</sup> Here, Bernard amplifies Lavater's comments on the subject of praising people (*Lavater* 58r-58v).

<sup>133</sup> Bernard here finds *Ruth* exemplary for men.

and art, as may much set them out with men: but if [p. 154] they want Religion and vertue, their praise is more heathenish then Christian: and therefore they have no cause to rejoyce in abilities of nature or art, seeing Satan the enemy of al mankind, may therein be preferred before them: and in nothing can man be said to be more excellent or happy then a very Devill, except in the right use of true Religion: in nothing else can he goe beyond him, nay, in no other thing can he equall him. Let therefore true Religion and undefiled before God the Father, which is, to visit the fatherlesse and widdowes in their adversity, and to keepe our selves unspotted of the world,<sup>134</sup> be our chieftest praise.

Verse 7. *And shee said, I pray you, let me gleane and gather after the Reapers, amongst the sheaves: so she came, and hath continued even from the morning, untill now, that shee tarried a little in the house.*

The Bayliffe proceedeth still on in the commendations of *Ruth*, from her humility and modestie in not presuming without leave: and then, from her diligence and constancy in her labour and paines-taking.

*And shee said, I pray you, let me gleane, and gather after the Reapers, amongst the sheaves.*] That is, the eares of corne which lie scattered by the sheaves, which yet lay abroad; and not that she did desire to be meddling with the sheaves. This she desired, and *Boaz* alloweth, verse 15, which seemeth therfore to be a special favor to her.<sup>135</sup> It was lawfull [p. 155] for strangers, fatherlesse, and widdowes, to gleane, by

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<sup>134</sup> See Jas. 1.27.

<sup>135</sup> Bernard later modifies his explanation of this favour (see p. 205). Boaz's favouring of Ruth's gleaning is the focus of much discussion by earlier commentators. Josephus declares that Boaz would not have Ruth glean 'but permitted her to reap and carry away all that she could', and states that Ruth brought sheaves to Naomi. (Josephus [Loeb] 147). He is followed by some medieval Christian

Gods allowance and commandement unto his people <Deut. 24.19>; yet she entereth not boldly upon that libertie, but asketh leave humbly and modestly. Whence we may learne, That *although God do bid the rich to relieve the poore, and to give leave in this case for them to gather scattered eares, yet is the same to bee obtained by leave, and the good will of the Owners*: as *Ruth* here hath leave. For though the rich be commanded to give by Gods Precept, yet before men they have right to all they have, and it is at their libertie to dispose thereof in that respect, and they may make choise of their poore, as they see them to need, and to be worthy of reliefe:<sup>136</sup> and therefore albeit a man be poore, he may not (because God commands the rich to relieve him) be his owne Carver;<sup>137</sup> he may not take from the rich any thing, but as it shall be bestowed upon him. Let the poore learne humility and modesty; and not be insolently bold and unthankful, or false and deceitfull, as many be, who make no conscience to filch<sup>138</sup> and steale, and thinke their poverty a reason sufficient to

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commentators; thus, Jerome relates that Boaz commanded his boys not only to allow Ruth to reap with them if she wishes, but also even to throw grain from their bundles for her (MET 2). That view evidently informs the allegorical interpretation of Boaz as the householder sharing his sheaves of knowledge (MET 50). Medieval Jewish commentators take note of Ruth being given more than the due of a gleaner. Salmon ben Yeroham observes that what Boaz ordered in verses 15 and 16 ‘was not the right of any gleaner or any poor man’ (BJE 67). The Anonymous Rabbi also comments on how exceptional it was for Ruth to be allowed in verse 15 to glean between the sheaves (BJE 124). The early modern commentators introduce a new element into their consideration of the text: Boaz’s exemplary generosity and discretion. Lavater observes that Boaz’s example teaches that rich men have a duty to help those in need, and maintains that those poor who are willing to labour deserve most to be helped. (76v-77r). In the first place, Topsell conveys the opinion that Ruth should not have gleaned among the sheaves (134, 135). The poor, Topsell states, must not abuse the liberty of the rich and take more than the owners can give without depriving other poor people (135). However, when he moves on to Boaz’s command that the servants let fall some of the sheaves for Ruth, he evidently does not see this as wrong in the same way. Rather, this is depicted as evidence of Boaz’s generosity towards the God fearing. For Topsell, Boaz’s selectivity in his giving proves that the godliest should be given most (136). This conclusion is supported in his further discussion (136-139). Thus, Topsell and Lavater teach from Ruth’s gleaning privileges the qualities of those who are the proper recipients of charitable giving. Bernard also notes Boaz’s generosity and draws lessons from it (see pp. 205, 206-7, 208-9).

<sup>136</sup> Bernard’s views on those who deserve charity are further developed as the chapter progresses. Bernard later devoted a whole book to the subject of charity, The Ready Way to Good Works (1635).

<sup>137</sup> ‘carver’: ‘fig. One who assigns any one his “portion”’. **†to be one’s own carver**: to take or choose for oneself at one’s own discretion.’ (OEDO).

<sup>138</sup> ‘filch’: ‘trans. To steal, esp. things of small value; to pilfer. Occas. in weaker sense: To take away surreptitiously.’ (OEDO).



excuse them, especially if it be but in trifling things as they account them, as is the picking now and then eares out of sheaves, or shockes of corne; or breaking hedges for firewood; or robbing of Orchards; or the like. But let them k[n]ow that povertie excuseth not their sinne; it is theft in them, and the Theefe is cursed; and theeves shall not inherit the Kingdome of God <Zech. 5;<sup>139</sup> 1 Cor. 6<sup>140</sup>>.<sup>141</sup>

*So shee came, and hath continued, even from the [p. 156] morning untill now.]*

After leave, shee set her selfe to worke, but before, as it may seeme, shee went home againe and stayed a little; so as her first comming was, but to know where to get leave, and then forthwith after, to fall to her labour, yet shee made not her mother acquainted with any thing till night, as appeareth by verse 19.<sup>142</sup> The chiefe point commended here to us, is, That *painefulnesse*<sup>143</sup> *in our labour with constancie, is prais-worthy*: so is it here in *Ruth*, as it was in *Jacob*,<sup>144</sup> and blessed in them both: for this is commanded, Eccles. 9.10, and the contrary forbidden, Rom. 12.<sup>145</sup> Let us then be diligent in our labour, and be constantly painfull: So shall God be obeyed, Eccles. 9.10; Prov. 27.23, who hath promised to blesse such, Prov. 28.19 and 20.13. So it is gainefull, to the body healthfull, it doth procure favour, Prov. 11.27, and honour, Prov. 12.24, and maketh rich, Prov. 10.4, with Gods blessing, Prov. 10.22. Beware then of sloth, which is forbidden, Rom. 12,<sup>146</sup> it bringeth men to follow vaine

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<sup>139</sup> Specifically, verses 1-4.

<sup>140</sup> Specifically, verses 9-10.

<sup>141</sup> This condemnation of theft is also found in Lavater and Topsell, who also note that Ruth's asking permission to glean contrasts with such theft (*Lavater* 58v; *Topsell* 99-100). Evidently, the early modern commentators were all concerned about lawlessness in their society.

<sup>142</sup> In making this explanation of Ruth tarrying a little in the house, that is, that she did so before she began to labour, Bernard avoids the problem Lavater appears to have found in admitting that Ruth stopped in her labour, unlike the woman in Proverbs (31) who laboured day and night (*Lavater* 59r, misprinted as 95r).

<sup>143</sup> 'painfulness': 'The quality of taking pains; diligence, assiduousness, industry.' (*OEDO*).

<sup>144</sup> See Gen.31.38-41

<sup>145</sup> Specifically, verse 11.

<sup>146</sup> Specifically, verse 11.

company, Prov. 28.19, gaming, Prov. 21.17,<sup>147</sup> as experience sheweth, and so hasteneth povertie, Prov. 10.4, as being the punishment thereof: for God threatneth such with scarcity, Prov. 19.15 and 12.24 and 6.6,<sup>148</sup> and we see that such become wastfull, Prov. 18.9, and their house decaieth, Eccles. 10.18. There be which labour, but not cherefully, not constantly; and therefore these may here learne to amend, by the example of this *Ruth*, and the good houswife in the Proverbs, which putteth her hands willingly to worke <Prov. 31.13>: for it is a hatefull thing to be [p. 157] slothfull in our businesse, and forbidden, as before is shewed <Prov. 10.26; Prov. 28.9<sup>149</sup>>.<sup>150</sup> In this the servant, or day-tale-man<sup>151</sup> may rob their Master; they are brethren to great wasters, saith *Salomon*,<sup>152</sup> and are a consumption to the estate of such as keepe them: yet such make no conscience of this deceitfull working, though perhaps they have a good measure of knowledge, and would be held more conscionable<sup>153</sup> then some others be.<sup>154</sup> But here it will be asked, perhaps, Who may be called slothfull? *Salomon* will tell them that such be slothfull, First, which refuse to worke, Prov. 21.25-6. Secondly, which make idle excuses to keepe them from dayly labour, Prov. 22.13 and 26.13. Thirdly, which be subject to much sleep: for sloth causeth sleep, Prov. 19.15. Fourthly, which love their beds too well, Prov. 26.14 and 24.33. Fiftly, which suffer their ground to lie unhusbanded, and their house to decay, Prov. 24.30-1; Eccles. 10.18. Sixtly, which for a little cold will

<sup>147</sup> Prov. 13.11 contrasts 'Wealth *gotten* by vanity' with that produced by labour but gaming as such is not considered in *Proverbs*, or indeed in the entire Bible.

<sup>148</sup> Verses 7-11 are also relevant.

<sup>149</sup> The correct reference may be Rom. 12.11.

<sup>150</sup> See pp. 125-6, 156.

<sup>151</sup> 'Day-tale-man': 'a day-labourer' (OEDO).

<sup>152</sup> See Prov. 18.9.

<sup>153</sup> 'Conscionable': 'having a conscience (= CONSCIONED), as in *tender-conscionable*; having a good conscience; governed by conscience; conscientious, scrupulous' (OEDO).

<sup>154</sup> That servants are the target of Bernard's attack is indicative of his concerns about their reliability (see the Introduction section 3).

neglect their profit, and doing of their duety, Prov. 19.4.<sup>155</sup> Seventhly and lastly, which goe lazily, as if they went upon thornes, and loth to hurt themselves, Prov. 15.19. These be *Salomons* markes of the slothfull.

*Save that shee tarried a little while in the house.*] Thus this servant is carefull to speake the truth in his relation to a small circumstance of time, that he might not be disproved.<sup>156</sup> *Honest minds and lovers of the truth, are carefull to speake truly every way, in every circumstance, that they may not be taxed in the least degree of untruth* <Neh. 4.23>. For he hath an high esteeme of the truth, whereupon he [p. 158] weigheth his words, and is carefull in speaking onely the truth <Eph. 4.25>.<sup>157</sup> Oh that this care were in every one now a dayes, as it should be! We are commanded to speake truth, and not to lie one to another; and God, whom we worship, is the God of truth <Rom. 3.4>: Christ is truth <Matt. 22.16>, and the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of truth <John 14.17>, leading into all truth: the Gospel, by which we beleeve, is the Word of truth: and lastly, it is a marke of one that shall dwell in Gods Tabernacle, and rest on his holy Hill, to speake the truth, and that from his heart too.<sup>158</sup> If we have such motives to presse us to this duety, then first, justly are they reprobable, which doe make no conscience of speaking truth; but are notorious lyers: such be of the Devill <John 8.44>, they live in one of those sinnes, which made the Lord to have a controversie with the Inhabitants of the land in the dayes of *Osea* <Hos. 4.2>, and the lyer shall be cast into everlasting destruction <Rev. 21.8>. There are such as seeme to make conscience of common lying, but yet will slip in the tongue now and

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<sup>155</sup> The correct reference is Prov. 20.4.

<sup>156</sup> Bernard makes light of Ruth's tarrying in the house, although the fact that earlier he explained it in a way (p. 156) which avoids Lavater's concern shows that it was a significant issue for both commentators.

<sup>157</sup> See Bernard's later discussion (pp. 298-9, 330-1, 334-5).

<sup>158</sup> See Ps. 15.1-2.

then, as, First, to flatter others: so did the foure hundred false prophets lye to *Ahab*;<sup>159</sup> so did *Doeg* to *Saul*.<sup>160</sup> Secondly, they that utter an untruth to doe another a pleasure,<sup>161</sup> which is called an officious lye,<sup>162</sup> as the Midwives in Egypt did,<sup>163</sup> and *Michol* when shee preserved *David*.<sup>164</sup> but we may not doe evill, that good may come thereof: we may not lye for God himselfe <Job 13.7, 10>. Thirdly, they that by lying make others merry. In all the Scripture I find not an example hereof. It may be, though many then were wicked, yet it seemeth, not one was so lewd, as [p. 159] to abuse his tongue with lying, to make others sport; it is wickednesse to make a sport of sinne. Fourthly, they that lye for gaine now and then, like *Gehezi*;<sup>165</sup> or as *Ananias* and *Saphira*,<sup>166</sup> whom the Lord fearefully punished: and yet it is too common for men now to lye for gaine, it is almost a marke of a tradesman. Fifthly, such as lye of ill-will, maliciously, and of envie, as *Haman* against the Jewes;<sup>167</sup> Scribes and Pharises against Christ;<sup>168</sup> and *Potiphars* wife against *Joseph*. Hence arise slander and backebiting, which Christians must carefully avoid; and not onely the hatefull kinds of lying, but the other also, and every untrue speaking in any degree; and to doe this, Speake ever with understanding, deliberately, without hasty passion, without by-respects, also avoid levity, and beware of too many words.

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<sup>159</sup> See 1 Kings 22, 2 Chron. 18.

<sup>160</sup> See 1 Sam. 22.

<sup>161</sup> 'To do a person (a) pleasure, †to show a person (a) pleasure': 'to perform an acceptable service for a person, do a person a favour' (OEDO).

<sup>162</sup> 'Officious lie': 'a lie told as an act of kindness to further another's interests' (OEDO).

<sup>163</sup> See Exod. 1.17-19.

<sup>164</sup> See 1 Sam. 19.14, 17.

<sup>165</sup> See 2 Kings 5.20-7.

<sup>166</sup> See Acts 5.1-11.

<sup>167</sup> See Esth. 3.8. Haman is not lying in this verse, but he is stirring up prejudice against the Jews.

<sup>168</sup> The most obvious malicious misrepresentation of Jesus is in Luke's account of the accusation against him before Pilate, Luke 23.2, 5.

Verse 8. *Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Goe not to gleane in another field, neither goe from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens.*

*Boaz* having heard of his servant who she was, and then also taking notice of her, from that which he also before had heard of her, as it appeareth in verse 11, he now turneth his speech unto her. Where note, who, to whom, how he speaketh, and what; even words of love and kindnesse, forbidding her to goe any whither else, but to abide by his maidens.

*Then said Boaz unto Ruth.*] This noble rich [p. 160] man sheweth great kindnesse unto the poore woman and stranger: when he knew what shee was, he vouchsafed to speake to her, and to comfort her in her poore estate. *The rich and the mightie are to shew themselves respective<sup>169</sup> to the poore, which be godly, though strangers, when they be rightly informed of them,* as *Boaz* sheweth himselfe to *Ruth* here. It is a signe that they are godly, which love godlinesse in others, especially the poore, themselves being rich. It greatly comforteth the afflicted spirit, and lifteth up the heart of such poore, and doth in some sort strengthen them in their well-doing.<sup>170</sup> Those rich men doe not well then, who doe in their high esteeme of themselves despise the poore, and hold them very dissemblers in their profession; supposing without charity, that the poore cannot be religious, when yet of the poore, for the most part, God chuseth his people <Jas. 2<sup>171</sup>>.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> 'Respective': 'Attentive to a person or thing' (OEDO).

<sup>170</sup> Bernard draws attention to the beneficial effects of rich individuals showing concern for the poor, but he is careful to preface these observations with a warning that the poor's merit should be clearly ascertained first.

<sup>171</sup> Specifically, verses 5-6.

<sup>172</sup> Here Bernard challenges his contemporaries who are disinclined to show sympathy for the deserving poor.

*Hearest thou not, my daughter?*]<sup>173</sup> Thus lovingly he speaketh unto her. And wee find in Scripture, that two sorts of persons thus spoke unto others: the elder unto the yonger, as *Eli* to *Samuel*,<sup>173</sup> *Boaz* here to *Ruth*; and men of authoritie to inferiours. So spake *Josua* unto *Achan* <Josh. 7<sup>174</sup>>; and *Joab* unto *Ahimaaz* <2 Sam. 18.22>. From this courteous speech of *Boaz* both as an old man, and also indeed as a man of authoritie, as appeareth in verse 1 and Chapter 4.1, we learne,

I. That *an humble and mercifull man speaketh kindly where he wisheth well*,<sup>175</sup> as also *Joseph* did to his brethren; *Jonathan* to *David* in distresse;<sup>176</sup> [p. 161] and *Job* to the poore <Job 31.18<sup>177</sup>>. Humility is not high-minded,<sup>178</sup> and mercy is compassionate, love cannot bee rough-hewed, and therefore such as have these graces, will be courteous, and cannot but use good tearmes, especially to the poore and needie. Which condemneth those as void of humility, mercy, and love, which are like churlish *Nabals*, and not like blessed *Boaz* unto the honest and painefull poore.<sup>179</sup>

II. That *the ancient in yeeres, and men in authority, are to behave themselves as Fathers unto others*; for so are they called, 1 Sam. 3.6; Josh. 7.19; 1 Sam. 24.11; 2 Kings 5.12,<sup>180</sup> and this must be in instruction, and good example; and the Magistrate in correcting, not with rigour, but as a father with mercy and compassion punishing the sinne, but loving the person, as a father doth. It is a foule fault for the gray-

<sup>173</sup> Bernard evidently refers to 1 Sam. 3.6, which he cites in II below, and 1 Sam. 3.16, which he cites on p. 292 in the related discussion there.

<sup>174</sup> Specifically, verse 19. Bernard cites this biblical reference in II below and on p. 292 in the related discussion there.

<sup>175</sup> This observation is stated in almost the same words by Topsell (109).

<sup>176</sup> See 1 Sam. 20.1-2.

<sup>177</sup> The correct reference may be Job 29.11-12.

<sup>178</sup> 'High-minded': 'having or characterized by a haughty, proud, or arrogant spirit' (OEDO).

<sup>179</sup> Bernard also discusses courteous speech on p 138 as well as on pp. 292-3. Bernard's chief concern here is to illustrate Boaz's qualities which make him a worthy match for Ruth. However, the allusion to Nabal brings to mind his refusal to help David as much as the terms of speech with which he expressed this refusal; that is, in mentioning Nabal, Bernard is attacking the avoidance of charitable acts to the poor rather than making an argument for loving speech.

<sup>180</sup> The correct reference is 2 Kings 5.13.

headed to be more child like, then father-like: and for a Magistrate to shew rather crueltie, then compassion. It were good for such to remember, That they are as Fathers, That the world is unstable, That their turne may come to stand in need of mercy; and they should think that God made the one as well as the other. This made *Job* to carry himselfe gently and humbly towards his inferiours <Job 31.15>.<sup>181</sup> And here let such as be in authoritie, be revered and loved as fathers, and beware that the ancient in yeeres be not despised, but rather doe them honour, Lev. 19.32, for old age is a Crowne of glory, when it is found in the way of righteousness <Prov. 16.31>. Let the children devoured, which mocked the old [p. 162] Prophet *Elisha*,<sup>182</sup> be a warning to all such to take heed, and remember *Corah* his rebellion against authority, and how the Lord punished it.<sup>183</sup>

*Goe not to gleane in another field, neither goe from hence; but abide here fast by my maidens.*] In harvest all worke that can; men and women are here sent into the field, and continued working: It is the time of reaping and carrying in Gods blessings given, and therefore may none be idle. To come to the matter betweene *Boaz* and *Ruth*, we see how before he in a loving tearme spake to her; here he expresseth his love in deeds, both in these, and the words following in the next verse. Note, That *the goodnesse of a mercifull good man stands not onely in*<sup>184</sup> *loving tearmes, nor in faire words, without good deeds*: both words and deeds are necessary to comfort the afflicted; with both which *Boaz* declareth his love to *Ruth*: he alloweth her to gleane amongst the sheaves; he warneth her not to goe any whither else; he willeth her to

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<sup>181</sup> Bernard's advocacy of paternalism in magistrates illustrates his perception that aspects of the primitive society in *Ruth* are relevant to his own time. His subsequent rendering of the reciprocation required of the subordinated reinforces the existing hierarchical norms of early modern society.

<sup>182</sup> See 2 Kings 2.23-4.

<sup>183</sup> See Num. 16.

<sup>184</sup> 'stand in': 'To consist of, have as its essence.' (OEDO).

keepe with his maidens, and to follow his Reapers, to eate victuals with them. Thus let men shew mercy in word and deed <1 John 3.18>: we may not doe well, and speake uncomfortably, neither may we give good words, and neglect good deeds, as some in Saint *James* time did <Jas. 2<sup>185</sup>>, and too many now doe. Another thing may we hence note, That *women are to keepe with women*; this is *Boaz* advice to her: and it is most fit for sexe, for safety, for preservation of chastitie, and a note<sup>186</sup> of woman-like modestie, from which such be farre, as delight rather in mens company: a note of wantonnesse, and of [p. 163] an unchaste heart.<sup>187</sup> Women must company with women; and yet some not with any<sup>188</sup> of that sexe. *Ruth* must keepe with *Boaz* maidens, the servants of a godly man. It is dangerous for a *Dinah* to goe to the daughters of the land; a chaste maiden to goe amongst wanton<sup>189</sup> idolatrous<sup>190</sup> women, or a vertuous woman amongst vicious wantons,<sup>191</sup> and unchaste persons. Therefore let her, which loveth her honestie, walke wisely towards both; avoid altogether the one, and be wise to judge of the other.<sup>192</sup>

Verse 9. *Let thine eyes be on the field that they doe reape, and goe thou after them: Have not I charged the yong men, that they should not touch thee? And when*

<sup>185</sup> Specifically, verses 15-16. Bernard's preoccupation with his pastoral role is well illustrated by this metamorphosis of James's theoretical case into a comment on actual misconduct.

<sup>186</sup> 'note': 'A sign, token, or indication of some quality, condition, fact, etc., or from which something may be inferred; a characteristic or distinguishing feature, mark, or symbol' (OEDQ).

<sup>187</sup> Bernard's explanation of Boaz's advice here in terms of a threat to chastity is noted in the Introduction, section 6.2, as demonstrating the perception by the early modern commentators in particular that Ruth faced sexual danger in going gleaning.

<sup>188</sup> 'with some, not any' [Grosart].

<sup>189</sup> 'wanton': 'Capricious, frivolous, giddy' (OEDO).

<sup>190</sup> 'idolatrous': 'Of, pertaining to, or of the nature of idolatry.' 'idolatry': 'Immoderate attachment to or veneration for any person or thing; admiration savouring of adoration.' (OEDO).

<sup>191</sup> 'wanton': 'A lascivious or lewd person.' (OEDO).

<sup>192</sup> Here, Bernard draws attention to some women being dangerous company for other women. See the Introduction section 6.2.



*thou art athirst, goe unto the vessels, and drinke of that which the yong men have drawne.*

*Boaz* goeth on expressing his love to *Ruth* more and more: and this is here shewed in three things. First, in willing her to follow the Reapers into every field. Secondly, in his care for her safety, in charging them not to touch her. Thirdly, in allowing to drinke when shee was dry, of that which was drawne for them.

*Let thine eyes be on the field that they doe reape, and goe thou after them.]*

*Boaz* had, it seemeth hereby, a great harvest: for this implyeth, they were to passe from field to field, and he willeth her to goe after whithersoever, and not to lose their company, as desirous to doe her good this way, and so to be beholden to him, as she should not need to go to any other place to gleane. See here how *bountifull* [p. 164] *a mercifull and loving man is: So is true love in whomsoever it is*, 1 Cor. 13.4,<sup>193</sup> and *Mercy is not miserly*, as appeareth in *Job*, Chapter 31,<sup>194</sup> and in *Cornelius*, Acts 10.2. See this also in the Lords love towards his beloved, his Church, fetched from the love of a Lover to his beloved, Ezek. 16.8, 10-12.<sup>195</sup> Let then our love and kindnesse appeare by our bounty and mercy, as *Joseph* shewed to his brethren and father; and *Pharaoh* did to them for his love to *Joseph* <Gen. 43.34 and 45.17-18>. Love where it is, cannot possibly be barren; they therefore which shew it not in workes of love and mercy, as need is, and their abilitie will give leave, they are no true Lovers of their brethren. People are now most in saying, nothing in doing; they are like the

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<sup>193</sup> Verses 5-7 are also relevant.

<sup>194</sup> Specifically, verses 16-22.

<sup>195</sup> Ezekiel relates Jerusalem's being identified by God with an adulterous woman. In this instance Bernard uses the Bible in a way which disregards the context.

Adamant, drawing all to them,<sup>196</sup> and as the Lions den, admitting in all, but suffering nothing to goe out. It is rare to heare of a Macedonian-like bounty, freely to give beyond abilitie;<sup>197</sup> or of any like a poore widow, which gave her two mites, all shee had.<sup>198</sup> If men would give of their superfluities, it were well. Oh that we loved as well the workes of mercy, and our poore brethren, and the Ministerie, yea but halfe so well, as we doe dainties for our bellies, brave clothes for our backs, and titles to bring our persons into reverence with men! But thus much for this.

*Have not I charged the yong men that they should not touch thee?*] To touch, is any way to wrong another, Gen. 26.11; Ps. 105.15; Zech. 1.8.<sup>199</sup> By which kind of speaking used by the Lord, we are taught, that *the least wrong is not to be offered to any*, [p. 165] not so much as to touch them, as by way of offering thereby injurie. This care had *Boaz* for *Ruth*, who not only doth her good, but preventeth evill from her, in laying his command upon them not to touch her. And in speaking by an interrogation, it is not onely to assure her of the truth, but it implyeth his authoritie over them, so as they durst not offer her any wrong, but would quietly suffer her to bee amongst them.<sup>200</sup> Whence note, I. *Young poore women and strangers even then*

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<sup>196</sup> ‘Adamant’: ‘Identified with the loadstone or magnet.’ (OEDO). This comparison and the rest of this passage closely resemble part of Topsell’s exposition of verses 8-9: Bernard paraphrases Topsell’s condemnation of worldlings ‘who (like the lions den) suffer all to come in, but none to come out: like the adamant which draweth all things, but casteth abroad nothing’; and he follows Topsell in noting that many people are shown up by the generosity of the Macedonians (Topsell 111). The Macedonians recur in different contexts in the treatments of Chapter 2 by Topsell (138) and Bernard (225), which illustrates Bernard’s capacity to develop the biblical interpretation of his predecessors in other parts of the Bible than *Ruth*. The reference to the poor widow who gave her two mites also occurs in Topsell’s exposition (Topsell 111). Topsell also draws attention to people’s reluctance to give to the poor and to the church (111). Significantly, Bernard’s allusions to Topsell come immediately after the distinction he draws between saying and doing, which follows Lavater’s discussion (Lavater 73r; see also RR 162): thus, Bernard synthesizes the work of the two preceding commentators.

<sup>197</sup> See 2 Cor. 8.1-5.

<sup>198</sup> See Luke 21.1-4.

<sup>199</sup> The correct reference is Zech. 2.8.

<sup>200</sup> Bernard’s exposition of the lemma up to this point follows Topsell (Topsell 110, 111-3). He goes on to synthesize Topsell’s interpretation with Lavater’s perception of a specifically sexual threat to *Ruth* (60r-61r). See the Introduction section 6.2.

were subject to abuse; and young men too wantonly given towards such. This *Boaz* knew, and therefore gave them this charge: For youth is vanitie, as *Salomon* speaketh,<sup>201</sup> and lust is as a commanding law over their hearts, except they have grace to restraints the same, and that must bee by ordering themselves according to Gods Word <Ps. 119.9>. Let youth take notice hereof. II. That *Boaz* had a command over his servants, so as they stood in awe of his word; else what had this beene for *Ruths* safetie? Neither would he have thus spoken, *Have not I charged them?* but that hee knew his word to bee a law to them. And such authoritie should Masters have over servants, who should bee subject to their Masters, and not stubborne and gain-saying, without care to shew obedience, as too many be.<sup>202</sup> III. That *Boaz* taketh care of her safetie; for love doth not onely good, but seeketh to prevent ill from such as they doe love and intertaine. Such care was in *Lot* towards his Guests <Gen. 19<sup>203</sup>>; and in the old man of Gibeah towards the Levite <Judg. 19.16, 23<sup>204</sup>>; for this is [p. 166] a fruit of love, and also of faithfulness, when any one hath taken another into his protection, and admitted among such as he hath authoritie over. This is an use for Magistrates; they should care for the preservation of others by their authoritie <Job 29.12, 17; Ps. 82.3-4; Prov. 31.8-9>, for therefore are they set in such a place: and if they have not this care, it is their sinne <Prov. 24.11<sup>205</sup>>; and as they must see to all, so especially to the Fatherlesse, Widowes, and Strangers, and poore Labourers; for wrong offered to these, greatly displeaseth God, which hee threatneth to revenge <Exod. 22,<sup>206</sup> Mal. 3.5>. And this should teach

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<sup>201</sup> See Eccles. 11.10.

<sup>202</sup> See Bernard's related discussion earlier in the chapter of the importance of masters overseeing their servants (143-5) See also the Introduction section 3.

<sup>203</sup> Specifically, verses 1-9.

<sup>204</sup> Verses 20-2 and 24 are also relevant.

<sup>205</sup> Verse 12 is also relevant.

<sup>206</sup> Specifically, verses 21-5.

Governours of families, so to rule and order their families, as they suffer not one to wrong another; that their eyes bee upon them so, as they should not dare to offend against honestie and chastitie, by sitting among, and dallying with yong women, by filthie and wanton songs, by any other allurements to sinne, which young women are to avoid, as they have a care to preserve their chastitie;<sup>207</sup> and young mens vanitie and wickednesse herein must be restrained by their Parents and Masters: yet are there some so farre from this, as they can take pleasure in the light<sup>208</sup> behaviour and wanton speeches of servants and others, especially in reaping their harvest, allowing them thus, as they account it, to be merrie with their tongues, to make their hands to worke the faster:<sup>209</sup> but this is in comparison a light fault, (though also a foule sinne, Eph. 5<sup>210</sup>) for some Masters are authors of uncleannes, and deflowre maidens themselves, like lustfull and foule adul- [p. 167] terers; but let such remember the wrath of God against them <Heb. 13;<sup>211</sup> Prov. 6;<sup>212</sup> Mal. 3.5>.<sup>213</sup>

*And when thou art athirst, goe unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawne.] Thirst will come upon the painefull labourer, and it must be quenched: Boaz therefore had provided for his servants vessels for water, which the young men drew; of this hee giveth Ruth leave to drinke. It may seeme a very*

<sup>207</sup> This advice is typical of contemporary conduct books. Thomas Salter's translation of Giovanni Bruto's *La institutione di una fanciulla nata nobilmente* (published in Italian and French in 1555) provides a good example. This book condemns the reading by young maidens of such items as ballads and songs as teaching evil (Salter sig. Biiv). The study of philosophy by maidens, in particular, is condemned since they would read lascivious books by writers such as Ovid. Ancient women who studied philosophy are declared to have practised dishonest and loose living. (Salter sig. Bvir – sig. Ciiv). Also, the playing of music with lascivious songs at banquets and feasts is claimed to kindle lewd affections (Salter sig. Cviv – sig. Cviir).

<sup>208</sup> 'Light': 'Wanton, unchaste.' (OEDO).

<sup>209</sup> Bernard shows his anxiety about the dangers he sees in the harvest environment in his own time. This perception, besides his awareness of the interpretation of his early modern predecessors, would have informed his view that Ruth faced a sexual threat in going gleanings.

<sup>210</sup> Specifically, verse 4.

<sup>211</sup> Specifically, verse 4.

<sup>212</sup> Specifically, verse 29.

<sup>213</sup> Bernard characteristically supports the condemnation of defiling masters, previously made by Lavater (61r-61v), with biblical references, which are not supplied by the earlier commentator.

small kindnesse to vouchsafe her libertie to drinke of the water; but we must know that it was common drinke for the best, as well as the worst: *Saul* drunke water <1 Sam. 26[.]11>; *Sisera* called for water <Judg. 4<sup>214</sup>>; *Abraham* gave a bottle to *Hagar* for *Ishmael* his sonne: and his servant drank water at *Rebeccaes* hand <Gen. 21.14 and 24<sup>215</sup>>. It was not easie neither to come by, in such an hot and high countrie, water was not every where so plentifull, as appeareth by the strife of *Abimelechs* and *Isaaks* servants <Gen. 26.19-21>; by *Hagars* lamenting for want of water;<sup>216</sup> by the Miracle wrought for *Samson* <Judg. 15<sup>217</sup>>: for the countrie was hot, and the waters above the earth soone dried up, the springs were hard to be found, and wells were very deepe <John 4<sup>218</sup>>; so as this was a very good favour of *Boaz* to *Ruth*; and *Ruth*, we see in the next verse, tooke it to be a great kindnesse, and was very thankfull in all humilitie. By this we see, that *a worke of mercy and love may be shewed in a small matter*, as in a cup of cold water sometime, which shal not lose the reward <Matt. 10.42>: for it is mercie to supply the want of others for an heartie compassion, how little soever the thing be. This may teach men to bee [p. 168] thankfull for supply of their want, though the matter be but little, and not to thinke mercie and kindnesse to consist in great gifts, and good turnes to be done in things of weight onely.

Verse 10. *Then she fell on h[e]r face, and bowed her selfe to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?*

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<sup>214</sup> Specifically, verse 19.

<sup>215</sup> Specifically, verses 17-18.

<sup>216</sup> See Gen. 21.15-16

<sup>217</sup> Specifically, verses 18-19.

<sup>218</sup> Specifically, verse 11.

*Ruths* thankfulness to *Boaz* set out by action and speech: the action was a most humble and lowly gesture; the speech was an acknowledgement of favour with admiration, with a reason thereof, for that she was a woman of another nation.<sup>219</sup>

*Then she fell on her face, and bowed her selfe to the ground.*] Thus *Ruth* beginneth to shew her thankfulness in a most respective fashion; which commendeth to us her good manners to so great a person. This manner of behaviour was much used in those Easterne parts; as we may see in *Jacob* to *Esau*; *Abraham* to the Hittites <Gen. 33.3 and 23.7[,] 12>; *David* to *Jonathan* <1 Sam. 20.41>; *Abigail* to *David*,<sup>220</sup> and the servant to his Lord <Matt. 18.26>. The Scripture often noteth the civill gesture and comely behaviour of his Servants, as worthy imitation, and as a just reproofe to the rude and uncivill.<sup>221</sup> But yet here is a caveat first to them which use such outward courtesies, that the same be done in humility of heart; that it be not a foolish affection,<sup>222</sup> an apish imitation, or meere courtly complementing,<sup>223</sup> being but all shadowes [p. 169] of humility, and yet indeed nothing lesse, as appeareth in the lively colours and publike Ensignes<sup>224</sup> of pride in such persons, if they be observed aright: Then next, that such as have these reverent gestures given them, doe consider whether they deserve them, for their place and person; if they doe not, receive them not; if they doe, yet not to waxe proud in heart thereby.

<sup>219</sup> In the exposition which follows, Bernard does not address the biblical prohibitions regarding Israelites' relations with foreigners, in particular, marriage with Moabites.

<sup>220</sup> See 1 Sam. 25.23-4.

<sup>221</sup> As on p. 147, Bernard interprets the Scripture as teaching humanity or civility. His allusion to still further biblical examples suggests that he attaches great importance to civility, which supports his hierarchical values.

<sup>222</sup> 'Affection': 'The act of affecting or assuming artificially' (OEDO). Affection or affectation was a frequent target of attention in contemporary conduct books for women (for example, Salter sig. Diiiiv – sig. Dvv). Bernard was no doubt aware of this although here he is not addressing women specifically.

<sup>223</sup> 'Complement': 'to employ ceremonies of formal courtesy, to exchange formal courtesies; to bow' (OEDO).

<sup>224</sup> 'Ensign': 'a sign, token, characteristic mark' (OEDO).

It may bee, some will here make some questions; as first, Whether it be lawfull to give honour thus unto man, in such an adoring manner? This is answered before: for the holy Ghost recordeth it as commendable. Secondly, then what difference betweene this which is done to men, and that which is done to God Almighty? Surely, in respect of the outward act, no difference is there at all, but of the minde, which doth conceive of God herein as God, and so this outward humiliation becommeth divine adoration; and of man, but as man, worthy of reverence and honour for his place, his age and gifts, and so the worship and reverence done him, is onely civill. Thirdly, some perhaps will aske, Whether this may be given unto wicked men? Yes without doubt, as we see *Jacobs* reverence to profane *Esau*; *Dauids*, to wicked *Saul*;<sup>225</sup> and *Abrahams* bowing of himselfe to the idolatrous Hittites: for men and their places are to be distinguished. True it is, that *Elisha* shewed little respect unto *Jehoram*;<sup>226</sup> and *Mordecai* would doe no reverence to proud *Haman*.<sup>227</sup> but these had (no doubt) some extraordinary warrant so to doe, and are not therefore for ordinary imi- [p. 170] tation; the reasons alleaged for *Mordecai* are knowne, and therefore I will not trouble here the Reader with them, because they bee but weake conjectures.

*Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?*] This humble soule wondreth at his so great kindnesse, though it was but to have leave to gleane, and to drinke water out of the vessels: She thought it strange, that so great a personage should speake thus respectfully<sup>228</sup> to her that was but a stranger. From hence may we observe, first, that the vertuous and

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<sup>225</sup> See 1 Sam. 24.8.

<sup>226</sup> See 2 Kings 3.13-14.

<sup>227</sup> See Esth. 3.2.

<sup>228</sup> Bernard is here using the word 'respectively' in the same sense as 'respective' on p. 160.

thankfull persons take most kindly such favours as bee shewed them, and doe wonder rather thereat, then make light thereof, though but in common and meane things, especially if the favours bee done with cheerefulnesse, as this vertuous woman *Ruth* doth here; for such doe looke into themselves, and their unworthinesse, thinking with themselves what might rather withdraw mens affections from them, than win them to them. They also looke up to God, and doe behold him in the Giver, she<sup>229</sup> being as Gods hand offering his mercies to them. These things make them to bee very thankfull, and to expresse it fully. This example of thankfulness is to be imitated of every one beholden unto others, and justly reproveth the ungratefull; of which there be these sorts, First, such as receive favours, and will not acknowledge them like the nine Lepers <Luke 17.18>. Secondly, such as scornefully refuse kindnesses offered, as they that will not [p. 171] be beholden unto others, because they thinke they can live of themselves. Thirdly, which will not requite a good turne done them, but rather churlishly reproach the partie, as *Nabal* did *David*. Fourthly, which will not helpe in need such as put their very lives in their hands for them and for others; thus dealt the men of Succoth with *Gideon*.<sup>230</sup> Fifthly, which in prosperity forget their friends, and what pleasure was done them in their adversity; as did *Pharaos* Cup-bearer <Gen. 40.23; Eccles. 9.15>. Sixtly, which recompence evill for good; as *Joash* did to *Jehoiada* his sonne;<sup>231</sup> *Hanun* to  *Davids* Messengers <2 Sam. 10.4>; or which love a man lesse, because of his love to them: and so the Corinthians to *Paul*; the more he loved them, the lesse was he beloved <2 Cor. 12.15>. All these are ingratefull. Now, ingratitude is a foule sinne, it is a stoppage to all favours, and drieth up the affection of mens hearts; and God punished it in

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<sup>229</sup> Bernard probably intended 'he'.

<sup>230</sup> See Judg. 8.5-6.

<sup>231</sup> See 2 Chron. 24.22.



*Joash* <2 Chron. 24.25>, and revenged it upon the Sechemites <Judg. 9.16, 20, 56-7>: and therefore let us not be guiltie of a sinne so hatefull to God and man.<sup>232</sup> II. We learne, that *it is a great favour and grace for a rich Inhabitant, to take knowledge of one poore and a stranger too*. This *Ruth* in her words here confesseth and admireth. For indeed, nothing but goodnesse in a man maketh him kind to strangers, especially poore ones: it is not nature, nor worldly reason. And therefore when strangers find favour where they come, let them acknowledge it a great kindnesse, and a mercy of God, and a worke of his grace. III. That *a godly man*, as *Boaz*, *will be good unto the godly poore, though a stranger*. And so should wee; as the Apo-  
[p. 172] stle commendeth it to us <Heb. 13.2>; and our Saviour in the Parable of the Samaritane: And we must consider, that we may come into strange places our selves, and need favour; remembring moreover this, that if such strangers be Christians, they be our brethren and sisters in Christ, for in him there is neither Jew nor Greeke, but we are all one <Col. 3.11; Gal. 3.28>. Which condemneth the ill disposition of such as cannot abide that strangers should come among them, and that not such as *Ruth*, of another nation, but such as be borne in the same kingdome, yea in the same countrey, if they feare any charge to come to them thereby. Oh how would they take on in our uncharitable dayes, if a poore *Naomi* should, after many yeeres, returne to the place of her former abode, and bring a poore woman with her, to charge the parish!<sup>233</sup> Well, good *Boaz* did not so, neither the Inhabitants of Bethlehem. IV. Note, how *shamefastnesse*,<sup>234</sup> *wisedome and humilitie are excellent ornaments of praise in a*

<sup>232</sup> Bernard adds divine retribution to the human response to ingratitude. The human response to ingratitude figures largely in the early modern commentaries on *Ruth*. Bernard himself returns to it (235), and it is mentioned by Lavater (65r) and dwelt on by Topsell (149). By mentioning divine retribution on the present occasion, Bernard reinforces the point that charity requires the recipient's thankfulness.

<sup>233</sup> A striking illustration of Bernard's applying events in the Bible to contemporary issues.

<sup>234</sup> 'Shamefastness': 'Modesty, sobriety of behaviour, decency, propriety; bashfulness, shyness' (OEDO).

woman, as they are here in *Ruth*; shee cast downe her eyes, not looking impudently upon him, shee bowed to the ground, and shewed humilitie, and her words were effectuall and few, and therein was her wisdom. These three, shamefast countenance, humble gesture, and fewnesse of words, doe grace a woman highly, and doe winne her honour, though never so poore. And therefore let women labour for them, more then for a faire face, gay clothes, and a great portion; these make them saleable with wantons and worldlings: but the other with the wise and vertuous.<sup>235</sup> This re- [p. 173] proveth such as be of a proud and hawtie carriage <Isa. 3.18<sup>236</sup>>, which are costly Dames, commanding Mistresses, but hardly obedient wives: such also as be great talkers, reproved by the Apostle <1 Tim. 5.13>: these be shrewd<sup>237</sup> Dames, often they breed contention abroad, and some disquietnesse at home, for want of the government of the tongue; such women as be bold without blushing, impudent Dames, which will not cover their faces with *Rebecca* for modestie sake,<sup>238</sup> but will goe naked so farre as modestie cryeth shame upon.<sup>239</sup> But they which have to sell, thinke they may be allowed to set open their shop-windowes. But chaste mindes seeing the deformity thereof, will frame themselves to a more decent and modest behaviour: such as would hold the name of the vertuous, will not so much labour in the outward shew, neither goe after the fashion of vaine persons.<sup>240</sup> Chaste *Penelope*, a Heathen, will stand covered before her Suters.<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> The concept that such qualities as Ruth showed in her obeisance gives women marriage prospects is developed in Ruth chapter 3 (pp. 297-8). For further lessons which Bernard and his early modern predecessors drew from Ruth's obeisance for early modern women, see the Introduction section 6.2.

<sup>236</sup> The correct reference is Isa. 3.16.

<sup>237</sup> 'Shrewd': 'Given to railing or scolding; shrewish' (OEDO).

<sup>238</sup> See Gen. 24.65.

<sup>239</sup> Bernard returns to this criticism twice in Chapter 3, where he complains of women going about with naked breasts (261) and half naked (323).

<sup>240</sup> Bernard returns to the issue of fashion later in Chapter 2 (p. 215 mistakenly numbered p. 199 in the 1628 edition) and in Chapter 3 (261).

<sup>241</sup> See *Odyssey* Book 1, line 334 (of the Greek text).

And will Christian women shew themselves so naked, as some doe, to the view of all? O impudencie! O immodest shew of lightnesse and vanitie!<sup>242</sup>

Verse 11. *And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully beene shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law, since the death of thine husband; and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people, which thou knewest not heretofore.*

*Boaz* his reply unto *Ruth*, giving her the reasons of his kindnesse towards her a stranger; which [p. 174] was by relation made to him before this, of her vertues shewed in her love to her mother in law, and in her grace and godlinesse, leaving her own country, to come and dwell amongst Gods people, though unknowne to her aforetime.

*And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully beene shewed mee, all that thou hast done.* A good report, and that to the full, was spread abroad of *Ruth*: of which *Boaz* had taken notice, and for which he was so kind to her, as hee here acknowledgeth. Whence note, I. That *virtue shall not want Trumpeters to sound out her praises to the full*, Ps. 37.6. *Ruth* was made renowned among all the people, and *Joseph* at length throughout all the land of Egypt: which is Gods mercy for encouragement to vertue; and this will those doe which love vertue in others.<sup>243</sup> Therefore let such as would be renowned, strive to be vertuous: It is the worthiest matter of praise and commendation. It procureth love, and that true love of such as

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<sup>242</sup> Bernard urges women to adopt submissive conduct without citing specific instances of women in his society showing it. However, he alludes to women who exemplify conduct of which he disapproves. In emphasising them, he can be seen to slip into the mode of the controversy about women.

<sup>243</sup> Bernard returns to the recognition of virtue in others in Chapter 3 (296).

never see us, as did *Salomons* fame,<sup>244</sup> and so Christs;<sup>245</sup> It causeth an honorable remembrance after death <*Vivit post funera virtus.*<sup>246</sup>>: It is such goods as cannot bee lost <*Bias, Omnia mea mecum porto.*<sup>247</sup>>; but beauty may with sicknesse and age bee defaced, strength also may decay: So *Haman* may lose his honour, and *Job* may be dispossessed of all his riches in a moment, but vertue abideth for ever. Lastly, this is pleasing to God, to all good men, yea and makes the Angels to attend upon us, as the Lord hath put the charge upon them. And yet the praise hereof is least respected, but men seeke praises which be after mans wisdome, [p. 175] earthly and sensuall: as *Absaloms* for beauty;<sup>248</sup> *Hamans* for favour with a King;<sup>249</sup> *Achitophels* for worldly policy;<sup>250</sup> others for riches and authority over their brethren; which yet they are no lasting praises, soone lost, and never afford true love in the hearts of men, as vertue doth <Prov. 4.18>: which may minister comfort to such as bee vertuous, who deserve true praises, and they shall not want them; they shall not neede to bragge, as the proud hypocriticall Pharise,<sup>251</sup> of their well-doing. Grant that many now will not give them their due, some of pride, other through envie, and a third sort of ill will cannot speake well: yet when they be dead, even such as did dispraise them, will then praise them: but howsoever,<sup>252</sup> they shall at the last Day receive praises of Jesus Christ before the Angels and all the wor[l]d, and be everlastingly rewarded for the same. II. That *well-doing procureth favour to the poore, though strangers, at the hands of the vertuous*: for this was the cause of *Boaz* love to *Ruth*, as here he

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<sup>244</sup> See 1 Kings 10.1, 6.

<sup>245</sup> See Matt. 4.24, Mark 1.28, Luke 4.14-15, 37, 5.15.

<sup>246</sup> 'Virtue lives on after death.'

<sup>247</sup> 'Bias, I carry my all with me.' Bias was a Greek philosopher, one of the seven wise men. See Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, vol. 1, 84-91.

<sup>248</sup> See 2 Sam. 14.25.

<sup>249</sup> See Esth. 3.1-2.

<sup>250</sup> See 2 Sam. 16.23.

<sup>251</sup> See Luke 18.11-12.

<sup>252</sup> 'Howsoever': 'In any case, at any rate' (*OEDO*).

acknowledgeth: and this is true godlinesse, to love others for their goodnes. Would you poore find favour? Labour to be vertuous: for God will procure the liking of others, and move them to doe you good, as God did *Boaz* heart towards *Ruth*. This is the way to doe you good, and not to live idly, lewdly, and by flatterie and talebearing, to think to prosper, which is the trade of too many poore ones. With some for a while they may find favour, but in the meane space they procure hatred of some others, and at length will be abhorred of [p. 176] all. And here let the rich learne upon whom to bestow freely their kindnesse, and whom to love and respect, even the godly poore, such as bee of the household of faith, for in them Christ is relieved, and such shall not lose their reward <Gal. 6.10; Matt. 25<sup>253</sup> and 10<sup>254</sup>>. If you aske, Who are these godly poore? I answer, Even such as *Ruth*, which get a good name by their vertuous lives, their duty done to their betters, their painefulnesse in labour; their conscience of Religion: These be the godly poore, and not the stubborne, the idle, the irreligious, swearing, fighting, railing, drunken poore, who are more worthy of punishment, than reliefe.

*Unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband.] Thus Boaz* beginneth to particularize her vertues; and the first here is her loving carriage, and praise-worthy behaviour unto her mother in law, not onely while her husband lived, but ever after, not ceasing to love because he was dead, for whose sake shee first was occasioned to love her. *Due prayes can be shewed in particular vertues.* See it in the praises of *Job*, *Cornelius*, the Angell of *Ephesus* <Job 1;<sup>255</sup> Acts 10.2; Rev. 2.1-2>. And therefore in praising any, wee must bee able to instance in those things

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<sup>253</sup> Specifically, verses 34-46.

<sup>254</sup> Specifically, verse 42.

<sup>255</sup> Specifically, verses 1, 8.

which deserve such praises, else it is sottish<sup>256</sup> ignorance, or grosse flatterie, or both. Againe note, That *whom we love for our friends sake being alive, if love be unfaigned, it will appeare, when they be dead.* This is *Ruths* love unto *Naomi*, *Davids* to *Mephibosheth* for *Jonathans* sake.<sup>257</sup> True love is a fountaine that never can be drawne drie. This reproveth the loose love of many, who can love, and lightly [p. 177] turne it into hatred of the same person upon small occasions; such also as can love their friend for his time, but when he is dead, will neglect all respect to every one of his, whom in his dayes they pretended to love.<sup>258</sup>

*And how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore.* This was rare love, and a very great measure of grace, for Religion sake, to forsake naturall parents,<sup>259</sup> for a mother in Law, her owne country, for a strange nation and people: shee must needs bee endued with a strong faith, and an extraordinary measure of love to Religion, and the worship of the true God. By which wee see, *that faith and fervent love overcome all difficulties*; even nature it selfe, as here in her, so in *Abraham*, when leaving his countrey, he travelled hee knew not whither <Heb. 11;<sup>260</sup> Gen. 12<sup>261</sup>>, and did offer up *Isaac* at Gods bidding, and put away *Ismael* <Gen. 22 and 21<sup>262</sup>>, and al three without gainsaying,<sup>263</sup> cherefully. These overcame carnall reason, and this desire of pleasing God, made Saint *Paul* a zealous Professor <Gal. 1.10>. Faith made *Gideon* to leave thousands behind him, and to bee content to enter the battaile whith 300

<sup>256</sup> 'Sottish': 'Foolish, doltish, stupid' (OEDO).

<sup>257</sup> See 2 Sam. 9.

<sup>258</sup> Bernard returns to the duty to show love to those left behind by dead friends on pp. 229-231. This is also a topic of concern to both Lavater (83v-85r) and Topsell (146-7). Bernard's emphasis on it shows the importance he attaches to supporting vulnerable members of society.

<sup>259</sup> This comma in this edition replaces a semicolon in the 1628 edition.

<sup>260</sup> Specifically, verse 8.

<sup>261</sup> Specifically, verse 4.

<sup>262</sup> Specifically, verses 9-14.

<sup>263</sup> 'Gainsay': 'to refuse' (OEDO).

against many thousands <Judg. 7.7,<sup>264</sup> 12 and 8.10 135000<sup>265</sup>>; so did *Joshua* by Gods direction command seven Priests to goe seven times about the walls of Jericho, to beate them downe with sound of Rammes hornes <Josh. 6<sup>266</sup>>. This faith and love made many proselytes and Heathen to become Christians, and Christians in the time of bloody persecutions, to forsake all for Christs sake, and his Gospell, as the [p. 178] Apostles spake of themselves unto Christ.<sup>267</sup> This faith and love of God will vanquish the world <1 John 5.4-5>, and will make *Moses* leave the Court of *Pharaoh*, to bee with Gods people in affliction, and will make *Amaziah* to separate himselfe from the wicked, and make light of an 100 talents of silver <2 Chron. 25.6, 9-10>; Yea so powerfull is faith and love of God, as they will overcome our selves, even to make light of our selves, and our lives, for the Lords sake, as we see in the blessed Martyrs, suffering cruell torments for the truth sake;<sup>268</sup> for the power of faith and spirituall love is supernaturall, and is wrought and so assisted by Gods Spirit, as no worldly, or fleshly impediments can hinder them in the way to eternall life. Therefore must we labour for these graces above all things, if wee would be masters over our selves; if wee would prevaile against all hinderances of our salvation. These will bridle lusts, contemne vaine honours, resist Satan and his temptations: and seeing they are so powerfull, hence may we see whether wee have this faith and true love, if we can overcome our corrupt nature, carnall reason, and this evill world: but if these overmaster us, then want wee this faith and love, from which those be farre off, who are led like beasts by nature, like sensuall men by lusts, corrupt reason, and

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<sup>264</sup> Verse 8 is also relevant.

<sup>265</sup> The figures for the opposing host in 8.10 give a total of 135,000.

<sup>266</sup> Specifically, verses 4,-5, 10, 15-16, 20.

<sup>267</sup> See Mark 10.28-30, Luke 18.28-30.

<sup>268</sup> Bernard refers to persecuted Protestants in the reign of Mary I. Foxe writes about them in Actes and monuments, which Bernard cites on p. 71.

by this unconstant world, and the vanities thereof. Though they doe beare the name of Christians, yet Christs power is farre from them.<sup>269</sup> Note further hence, why hee speaketh thus to *Ruth*: even to give her to know the true cause of his kindnesse, [p. 179] and good respect towards her, even her godlinesse and grace; which may teach, That *vertue and grace are the greatest motives to incite great men, which be also good men, unto the workes of mercy and bounty to the poore*: as we here see by *Boaz* speeches; for vertue is lovely to them which are vertuous, though the parties be never so poore. Let then the poore labour for grace and godlinesse, that they may find mercy at the hands of the wealthy, for if they feare God, he wil be their spokes-man, hee will move the hearts of others to doe them good. Though this bee the way to procure favour, yet commonly we see the poore idle, and too lewd of life; and yet they murmure, curse, and rage, if they be not relieved: for they thinke they ought to be relieved, even because they bee poore, though never so wicked, though they will hardly labour to take any paines to live, when of such the Apostle speaketh, that they should not be relieved. *Hee that will not labour, let him not eate*, saith the Apostle <2 Thess. 3<sup>270</sup>>.<sup>271</sup> As this is for instruction to the poore: so the rich from *Boaz* may learne, on whom to bestow their favours, and workes of mercy, even upon the godly, the houshold of faith: for in them Christ is relieved, in them they doe lend unto the Lord, who will repay them to the full, and greatly reward them <Gal. 6.10; Matt.

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<sup>269</sup> Bernard would be thinking primarily of certain church members outside the puritan fold whom he considers to be merely nominal Christians.

<sup>270</sup> Specifically, verse 10.

<sup>271</sup> Bernard follows Topsell (*Topsell* 137) in drawing attention to the complaints of the undeserving poor when they are not relieved and insisting that they should not be given in to. By adopting this position these commentators show their disapproval of the undeserving poor and counter any excuse by the wealthy that all giving to the poor is a waste because certain of the relieved poor insist on leading a wicked existence.



25<sup>272</sup> and 10;<sup>273</sup> Prov. 19.17; Ps. 41.1-3>. But of this a little before in the beginning of this verse.<sup>274</sup>

[p. 180] Verse 12. *The Lord recompence thy worke, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.*

These words are a prayer and blessing pronounced out of the mouth of *Boaz* upon poore *Ruth* which doth marvailously set out the pietie of this man. Here may be noted, who makes this request, to whom, for what, for whom, and why.

*The Lord recompence thy worke.*] This rich *Boaz* prayeth for poore *Ruth*. Whence note, I. That *there is a recompence of reward from God, even to the poore for well-doing*: this the prayer of *Boaz* sheweth, who else would not have begged it at Gods hand; and we must know, that the Lord in promising to reward well-doing, excepts against none, rich nor poore, but will recompence the wel-doer, be he whosoever; with him is no respect of persons, but he that worketh righteousness, is accepted of him <Acts 10<sup>275</sup>>; and godlinesse (in whomsoever it be) hath the Promise of this life and of the life to come <1 Tim. 4.8>. Let this comfort the poore in their well-doing, and in their works of vertue and godlinesse.

*Question.* Here it may be demanded, what good workes can the poore doe, to expect reward from God, seeing they have no riches?

*Answer.* A good worke is not, nor stands not onely in giving almes, and such like things, for then should onely the rich be doers of good [p. 181] workes: but

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<sup>272</sup> See note on p. 176, above.

<sup>273</sup> See note on p. 176, above.

<sup>274</sup> See pp. 175-6.

<sup>275</sup> Specifically, verses 34-5.

many other things are good workes, and approved of God, and which he will recompence, which the poore, that have not one peny, may doe; as to doe the duety of love and obedience to their parents, or to others to whom they owe it; to forsake idolatrie for the true worship of God; to leave their countrey for the Lords sake and for his people; to forsake their old heathenish acquaintance and kindred. All which *Ruth* did: and these may the poore doe, which workes God will recompence; and all other duties which one oweth to another, in any sort, being done in faith, in love, and in obedience to God, they are good workes, and the Lord will reward the same; even the honest and painefull service of a poore servant, as the Apostle teacheth <Col. 3.24<sup>276</sup>>. Wee see then, that the poorest may doe good workes, though not such, as commonly are so called, to the doing whereof the worlds wealth is required; and yet herein a poore soules two mites are more acceptable to God, then the superfluities of the rich.<sup>277</sup> II. *The rich*, from the example of Boaz, *may not thinke scorne to pray, and that very heartily for the poore*. It is a very rare example to see so mighty a man of wealth, and so high in authoritie, to be so much taken up in his affection, in considering the poore womans vertue, as to breake forth into so vehement a prayer as this was, as appeareth by the doubling of the words: and yet this ought rich men to doe, if they thinke that the poore are not excluded out of the communion of Saints, and that they be [p. 182] the children of God with them, as they are taught in the Lords Prayer.<sup>278</sup> This would shew a great measure of grace,

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<sup>276</sup> Verses 22-3 are also relevant.

<sup>277</sup> Here Bernard reiterates his encouragement of poor people to give, again citing the example of poor widow, Luke 21.1-4 (see p. 164).

<sup>278</sup> Bernard's reference to praying for 'the communion of Saints' and 'the children of God' according to the Lord's prayer relates to his exposition of this prayer in his *Common Catechisme* (1630). The answer to the question of whom is meant by 'Our' in 'Our Father' is 'All such as have the spirit of adoption, and are in the Communion of saints.' (CC C1r); another answer is that God is begged to forgive 'Us, I and all other his children.' (CC C2v). Bernard here shows that he expects his readers to have been prepared by catechizing to learn from preaching (FS 9).

this would encourage much the poore to goe on in well-doing. But, alas, this comes not once into the thought of a rich man; he thinks the poore bound to pray for him, but himselfe not at all, upon any occasion for them, because he thinkes he can pleasure them, but they can no way pleasure him; so he considereth onely outward and personall benefit, and not the excellencie of vertue, and fruit thereof to them and others, as *Boaz* did.

*And a full reward be given thee.] A good man thinks his mercies and kindnesse are not enough to recompence and reward the vertue, and workes of well-doing in others:* for he valueth vertue above wealth, and above the price of all these transitorie things. Againe note, that there is to be expected a full reward for a good worke; I say, first a reward, yet so, that it be looked for in mercy, and not in merit;<sup>279</sup> for God hath promised a reward, and that in many places of Scripture; and then it shall be a full reward, which *Boaz* prayeth for here, to be given to *Ruth*: which shall be certainly accomplished in the life to come, and here sometime in a great measure, as it was to *Ruth*, in giving her *Boaz* for an husband, which he little thought of in this prayer, that he should be the reward of her godlinesse and grace. This is an excellent incouragement to vertue and good workes.

*Of the Lord God of Israel.] Israel was Jacobs name, and now applied to all his posterity the [p. 183] people of God: Thus was the true God called, by the name of God, noting the persons in the Trinity; and of Lord, noting his substance,<sup>280</sup> and being of himselfe, as the originall words to the Learned doe shew; and he is the Lord*

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<sup>279</sup> Bernard here evidently engages with the Roman Catholic position, addressed at length by both Lavater (68v-70r) and Topsell (120-3). The latter, in particular, focuses on criticising Roman Catholics for holding that good works merit eternal life. Bernard also criticises this view but follows Lavater in claiming that good works will be rewarded in the afterlife (Lavater 68v, 71r). That Bernard makes this claim suggests that he diverges from the strict Calvinist position on predestination. See the Introduction section 3.

<sup>280</sup> 'Substance': 'essential nature, essence; *esp. Theol.*, with regard to the being of God, the divine nature or essence in respect of which the three Persons of the Trinity are one' (OEDO).

God of Israel, because he chose the Israelites to be his people before all other nations of the Earth <Deut. 7.6>, a type of the Elect number, called The Israel of God <Gal. 6<sup>281</sup>>.<sup>282</sup> To this true and everliving God, doth *Boaz* make request for a full and perfect reward, shewing, that *it is not in man, but it must be God that can make a full payment to godlinesse*; the full reward is to be given of him, and therefore from him it is to be expected, who hath the recompence in his hand, in full perfection.

*Under whose wings.*] A figurative speech usuall in Psalmes to expresse the love of God, and the protection of such as be his <Ps. 17.8 and 57<sup>283</sup> and 36.7 and 61<sup>284</sup>>; for as a Hen nourisheth and defendeth her young ones under her wings, from the Kite and other ravenous birds: so doth the Lord care for his people, to keepe them in safety from dangers. *They are safely protected, who come to the Lord and trust in him* <Deut. 33.29; Ps. 91>: for God hath undertaken to protect such, and he is able to defend them, and he will doe it, because he loveth them <Zech. 2.8<sup>285</sup>>. Oh then, let us labour to be of the Lords people, to goe unto him, and to trust in him! Men being in danger here, get into great mens service<sup>286</sup> for protection; and we being in greater danger, yea in such dangers every day, on the right and left hand, from which none can deliver us, but God, should not we seeke his ser- [p. 184] vice for protection? And being in it, let us be comforted, as sure of his aide; let us trust in him, as did *David*; for he saveth all them that put their trust in him. Let us in neede runne to him for aid, as did *David*, and desired to be saved by him, and let us rejoyce under the

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<sup>281</sup> Specifically, verse 16.

<sup>282</sup> As on p. 124 Bernard employs the concept of 'type', which is characteristic of medieval Christian interpretations of *Ruth*. For a discussion of the significance of Bernard's reference to 'the Elect number, called The Israel of God' for his position on predestination, see the Introduction section 3.

<sup>283</sup> Specifically, verse 1.

<sup>284</sup> Specifically, verse 4.

<sup>285</sup> Verse 9 is also relevant.

<sup>286</sup> 'Service': either 'the condition of being a servant of a particular master' or 'Feudal allegiance, fealty; profession of allegiance, homage' (*OEDO*).

shadow of his wings <Ps. 61.4; Ps. 17.7 and 57.1; Ps. 17.8 and 119.94; Ps. 63.7; Ps. 34<sup>287</sup> and 91; Job 1<sup>288</sup>>: for his Angels shall guard us, and pitch their Tents about us: he will make a hedge about us also: and if this will not be defence enough, then will he be a wall of fire <Zech. 2.5>, so sure and safe shall we be from all our enemies.

*Thou art come to trust.*] Boaz taketh it for granted, that shee had faith:<sup>289</sup> for they that come to God, must beleieve that he is <Heb. 11<sup>290</sup>>. This draweth us to God, this keepeth us with him, when we be come unto him. Now, that we may know what is here meant by faith, we must understand that there be degrees hereof: as to beleieve there is a God, against all the Atheists, which deny this principle in nature. II. That that which we beleieve to be God, be the true God, even God by nature, and none other, and that he is not many, but one God onely, against all Idolaters and worshippers of false gods. III. That hee be such a one as hee revealeth himselfe in his Word, and so conceived of, and no otherwise, a Spirit, True, Just, Mercifull, Almighty and so forth, against all carnall conceits and fleshly apprehensions of God, as is in the ignorant multitude, and the blind Papists our Adversaries.<sup>291</sup> IV. That we have sure confidence in him, wholly relying upon him, and commending our selves so to his protection, as unto a [p. 185] safe place, where we thinke to be sure: and so the word in the originall is here used <charah, *recepit se in locum, ubi sit tectus ab iniuria.*<sup>292</sup>>. The knowledge hereof should make us to examine our faith, whether we thus trust in him, and have the saving faith, which maketh not ashamed. Such a faith

<sup>287</sup> Specifically, verses 4, 6- 8, 10, 15, 17, 19-20, 22.

<sup>288</sup> Specifically, verses 8, 10, 12.

<sup>289</sup> Here Bernard follows Topsell who observes that Boaz said that Ruth was come to trust under the wings of God because faith caused her to go from Moab to the Jewish people (121). Bernard builds on Topsell's observation by specifying being under the wings of God as the fourth degree of faith.

<sup>290</sup> Verse 6 specifically is referred to here, although in this passage Bernard discusses faith in a way that both amplifies the meaning given it in verse 1 in particular and draws on certain of the examples of faith in various verses in Heb. 11.

<sup>291</sup> Bernard is here referring to transubstantiation.

<sup>292</sup> 'He betook himself to the place where he would be protected from harm.'

is, First, without hypocrisie, being faith unfained <1 Tim. 1.5>. Secondly, It is accompanied with the Spirit of God <Gal. 3.14>. Thirdly, Where it is, there is inward peace of conscience <Rom. 5.1; Heb. 4<sup>293</sup>>, and freedome to draw nigh to God with boldnesse <Eph. 3.12>. Fourthly, It sheweth it selfe in a godly conversation;<sup>294</sup> for the heart is purged, and pure, and a good conscience is joyned with it <Acts 15.9; 1 Tim. 1.5>: it worketh also by love, and sheweth it selfe by workes <Gal. 5.6; Jas. 2.7<sup>295</sup>>, and so causeth obedience to the good pleasure and will of God, as we may see in *Noah* building the Arke, and in *Abraham* offering up *Isaac* <Heb. 11<sup>296</sup>>.<sup>297</sup> Fifthly, and lastly, it maketh us to rejoyce in the meanes of salvation, and to bee of one heart and soule with the Beleevers, and such as wee perceive to feare God <Acts 13.48 and 4.32>. By all which, our faith may be examined; and by these may we know how little there is in men in these dayes, where and when there is such hypocrisie, so little true love of the Word, or of them that love it, and so much wickednesse and lewdnesse; they make open proclamation, that this grace of true saving faith was never grafted in their hearts.

[p. 186] Verse 13. *Then she said, Let me find favour in thy sight, my Lord, for thou hast comforted mee, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine hand-maid, though I be not like unto one of thine hand-maidens.*

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<sup>293</sup> Specifically, verse 3.

<sup>294</sup> 'Conversation': 'manner of conducting oneself in the world or in society; behaviour, mode or course of life' (*OEDO*).

<sup>295</sup> The correct reference is Jas. 2.18.

<sup>296</sup> Specifically, verses 7, 17.

<sup>297</sup> Bernard's discussion here overlaps with his discussion on pp. 177-8, which also draws on Heb. 11, and adds to the Old Testament illustrations in this chapter examples of works brought about by faith in Christians.

Ruths speech unto *Boaz*, acknowledging his favour with great humility, shewing what it wrought in her, and the reason also thereof, with a debasing of her selfe as inferior to his servants.

*Then shee said, Let me find favour in thy sight.*] These words may be read two wayes, either thus as here, and then they shew *Ruths* desire of the countenance<sup>298</sup> of his favour <1 Sam. 1.18; 2 Sam. 16.4>. For *the poore doe not onely desire to get the rich mans good will, but would gladly have it continued.* And a thankefull mind seeketh the continuance of undeserved favours, and not *Hanuns* part, 2 Sam. 10.<sup>299</sup> Or the words may be read thus, *I doe find favour in thy sight.* And it is then, as if shee had said, It is enough that I a poore stranger find this favour in thine eyes; so are the words to be taken, Gen. 33.15, and so in 2 Sam. 16.4.<sup>300</sup> Shee did not expect so much at his hands: and therefore knowing her selfe to have deserved nothing at his hands, shee rests very thankefull for this so great a kindnesse: For *where nothing is deserved, and nothing owing, there to finde speciall favour, deserveth great thanks:* Which heere shee acknowledgeth; and in the like case so must we. The choise of the reading I leave to mens<sup>301</sup> will; either may stand, and the [p. 187] Learned in the tongue use either; and our last Translation in the margent<sup>302</sup> leaveth it free. The thing shee either asketh, or acknowledgeth, is favour, or mercy, compassion and good will (all which the word signifieth <chen, *Misericordia, compassio, benevolentia, gratia, favor,*<sup>303</sup> *etcetera.*>) in his eyes: By which word shee confesseth all his kindnesses in

<sup>298</sup> 'Countenance': 'demeanour or manner towards others as expressing good or ill will; show of feeling or manifestation of regard towards another' ([OEDO](#)).

<sup>299</sup> Specifically, verses 1-4.

<sup>300</sup> The second mention of 2 Sam. 16.4 seems to be an error.

<sup>301</sup> Here, Bernard addresses his readers as male.

<sup>302</sup> 'Margent': 'margin' ([OEDO](#)). Bernard refers to a margin note in the A.V. linked to the point in the verse before 'Let me find favour' which reads 'Or, *I find favour.*'

<sup>303</sup> 'Mercy, compassion, goodwill, kindness, favour'.

word and deed shewed to her, to be of his meere<sup>304</sup> goodnesse and good will; and so should workes of mercy come from the rich to the poore: the eye of the rich looking upon the poore, should worke compassion in the heart; then doe such find favour in their eyes, when they are beheld and looked upon with respect to do them good. This favour in the eyes, is not in every rich man, when he beholdeth the needy; it must be a good *Boaz* that hath such eyes, for a *Nabal* wants them.<sup>305</sup>

*My Lord.*] A title of reverence shee giveth him. The word <adon> signifieth such a one as beareth up the familie or Common-wealth as a Pillar: thus the name *Lord* importeth. I wish this title to be remembred of the great Ones, that they may shew themselves Pillars and upholders of the Common-wealth and of their houses, and not destroyers of them.<sup>306</sup> The thing I note, is this; *It is lawfull to give honorable titles unto men, as befitteth their place;*<sup>307</sup> So did *Aaron* to *Moses* <Num. 12.11>; *Hannah* to *Samuel* <1 Sam. 2<sup>308</sup>>; *Obadiah* to *Elijah* <1 Kings 18.7>; and *Hazael* to *Elisha* <2 Kings 8.12>; and so did the Hittites to *Abraham* <Gen. 23.6>; so as both such as were in, and such as were out of the Church used such tearmes of reverence;

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<sup>304</sup> 'Mere': 'that is what it is in the full sense of the term qualified; nothing short of (what is expressed by the following noun); absolute, sheer, perfect, downright, veritable' (OEDO).

<sup>305</sup> Bernard derives from the word 'favour' a correct foundation for charitable acts. He does not consider how Boaz's kindness here compares with other instances of kindness in *Ruth*. In particular, he does not discuss it in relation to the 'favour' (in the biblical text, *Lavater* 23v) or '*chaesed*' or hesed *Lavater* elaborates on in expounding *Ruth* 1.8 which Naomi prayed God would do to her daughters-in-law as they had done to the dead and to her. According to *Lavater*, 'The worde *chaesed* signifieth godlines, mercifulnes, benigntie, and bountifulnes, not after a certaine maner but whiche doth proceede from an ardent affection, that speech is oftentimes found in the scriptures & this word EMETH is added, that is, truth or fayth' (25v). For a modern study of hesed, see Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, *The Meaning of Hesed in the Hebrew Bible*.

<sup>306</sup> Bernard's overriding emphasis in this exposition of 'My Lord' is on the duty of those in high positions, and he goes on to imply the limitation of honouring by inferiors if honour is not merited.

<sup>307</sup> *Lavater* expresses the significance of the similar but more definitely expressed point he makes regarding *Ruth*'s addressing Boaz as 'my Lord', that worthy men should not be defrauded of the honour due to them. He indicates that this argument engages with those, including certain Anabaptists, of the opinion that no one should be given a title of honour since everyone is descended from Adam and has the same redeemer (72r-72v). Bernard will also have had the Anabaptists in mind.

<sup>308</sup> The correct reference is probably 1 Sam. 1.15, in which Hannah addresses Eli.



and therefore may they be used, as Saint *Luke* did, and also Saint *Paul* <Luke 1.3; Acts 26.25>; herein taking heed of unjust titles, [p. 188] of base flattery, and the excesse in giving even just titles. Note againe another thing, that *the more humble men of good place and wealth shew themselves to be, the more honour they get*, as we see here: Shee did him reverence before, verse 10, in a most humble gesture, when shee saw his worldly kindnesse: but now perceiving the ground to be the love of her vertues, and so himselfe to be a lover of vertue, shee calleth him Lord, encreasing in her honouring of him, as shee tooke knowledge of his worthinesse, the more for his love of vertue and godlinesse, then for the outward and worldly kindnesse. Here is wisdom, and an excellent example teaching how to honour men truly, how farre, and especially for what. This instructeth men to carry themselves lowly, which are of place, and to expresse their love of vertue: it shall not make them be lesse, but more esteemed by much of those that be godly and wise; else were they reprobable. *Jonathans* humility and goodnesse lost him no reverence with *David* <1 Sam. 20.41>. They be counted clownishly base, or foolishly proud, or ill-mannered, which will give lesse honour to a man for his vertues and humility, when as<sup>309</sup> he is to be esteemed for that cause more worthy of encrease of honour with men of wisdom and understanding.

*For that thou hast comforted me:]* to wit, a stranger, a widdow, and poore, even me hast thou comforted by such gracious speeches, so full of mercy and pietie. The word *comforted*, by an Antiphrasis<sup>310</sup> signifieth a freedome from griefe <nacham, Gen. 24.64<sup>311</sup>>: which implyeth, that before, she was not without hea- [p. 189]

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<sup>309</sup> 'When as': 'seeing that, inasmuch as' (OEDO).

<sup>310</sup> 'Antiphrasis': 'a figure of speech by which words are used in a sense opposite to their proper meaning' (OEDO).

<sup>311</sup> The correct reference is Gen. 24.67.

vinesse in this her poore estate: for a widdow poore and a stranger in the place of her abode, how can shee not be sad and pensive? *Afflictions are not joyous to any for the present*, they will make sad the heart of the best for a while, so long as we carry about this corrupt heart and nature of ours; and therefore let men looke upon the afflicted with compassion, to comfort them. Many wayes did *Boaz* comfort poore *Ruth*: First, by a loving appellation, calling her his daughter, verse 8. Secondly, by allowing her to gleane in his fields, and willing her so to continue with his maidens, verses 8, 9. Thirdly, by charging his servants in her hearing, not to touch her, verse 9. Fourthly, by graunting her freedome to drinke with his servants when shee should be thirstie. Fifthly, by commending her vertues, and making mention of her former well-doing. And sixtly, in heartily praying for her. Thus may the poore afflicted be comforted by the wealthy and persons of authority, and especially in praysing their vertues and praying for them: for the godly esteeme highly of the prayers of the godly: for they know that God heareth them. The prayer of faith and fervency of spirit availeth much <Jas. 5.16>, and God hath promised to heare one for another, and it is a signe of the Lords great displeasure, when he will not have one to pray for others <Gen. 20.7; Job 42.8; 1 Sam. 16.1; Jer. 7.16 and 11.14 and 14.11>. Therefore let us make much of the prayers of the godly, for they are comfortable. Saint *Paul* besought the Saints to pray for him, and that very often: and this he doth almost in every Epistle, he intreateth the [p. 190] Romanes, Ephesians, Philippians, Corinthians, Thessalonians, Colossians, the Hebrewes, all but the backsliding

Galatians:<sup>312</sup> a thing worthy of note <Rom. 15.30; Eph. 6.18;<sup>313</sup> 2 Cor. 1.11; 2 Thess. 3.1; 1 Thess. 5.25; Heb. 13.18-19;<sup>314</sup> Phil. 1.19; Col. 4.3>.<sup>315</sup>

*And for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid.]* This sheweth wherein shee tooke the greatest comfort, even in his last words, in praising her vertues, and praying for her: which sheweth, what it is wherein *the godly poore take speciall comfort, even in their good name for well-doing, and in the prayers of such as be godly.* To be praised of the godly for well-doing, is great comfort: for they be the best Judges thereof, and they be the best men; and their prayers, as before is noted,<sup>316</sup> are availeable with God. Let us then strive to get a good name with them, and to have their prayers, and requests to God for us; and when we get these, let us be comforted therein. The word translated *friendly*, is in the Hebrew, *to the heart*,<sup>317</sup> and so the Septuagints translate it <al leb, epi kardion>: *The heart is affected with comfortable words.* Thus *Joseph* also spake to the heart of his brethren <Gen. 50.21>: for the heart in adversity wisheth comfort, and when the same is offered, it rejoyceth therein. Therefore must we so speake to the afflicted, as we may make glad the heart of the oppressed <Hos. 2.14>. So doth the Lord speake to his people: and so commandeth he his Prophets to speake unto them <Isa. 40.2>. Now, to speake to the heart of another, is thus: First, when we speake with a feeling of their afflictions from our owne hearts: thus the Jewes comforted *Mary* and *Martha* <John

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<sup>312</sup> See especially Gal. 3.1-4.

<sup>313</sup> Verse 19 is also relevant.

<sup>314</sup> Bernard does not take account of the recognition from the time of the Reformation that Paul could not have been the writer of the Book of Hebrews (see the preface to the Book of Hebrews in the New International Version Study Bible).

<sup>315</sup> The number of references provided here reflects Bernard's emphasis upon the importance of Boaz's praying for Ruth. This emphasis may well indicate Bernard's concern about the lack of godliness in his society.

<sup>316</sup> See pp. 189-90.

<sup>317</sup> Bernard here draws on the A.V. marginal note linked to the beginning of the word 'friendly' in this verse: 'Heb. *to the heart*.'

11.19>. The *Syriach*<sup>318</sup> there is, They *spake with [p. 191] their heart*; and so spake Saint *Paul* to the Thessalonians <1 Thess. 2.11>: And secondly, to speake such things as tend to their comfort, and what we know in their case may comfort them, as *Joseph* did to his brethren <Gen. 50.21>; and as the Prophet *Esay* sheweth in Chapter 40.2. If this be our duety and our mercy to the distressed, then they offend against mercy and charity, who speake uncomfortably unto the afflicted, as the Jewes did to our Saviour upon the crosse; and the friends of *Job* unto *Job*, which much displeased the Lord, and kindled his wrath against them.<sup>319</sup> *Boaz* before called her his daughter, but shee nameth her selfe to be his handmaid: a tearme of humility, and a note of modesty in her selfe, who was nothing lifted up with a proud conceit of her selfe, for all his favour and commendations: For *godly and humble persons are in themselves no whit the higher minded for the good that is spoken of them, nor for the countenance of great persons towards them*: for they truely know themselves to be nothing, and that all is from God, the Fountaine of goodnesse. Therefore there is no danger to praise these upon just cause to their faces for their comfort, as *Boaz* doth *Ruth* here, especially being in a low estate, and in affliction.

*Though I be not like one of thine handmaidens.*] Thus doth *Ruth* debase her selfe: for *such as be truely religious, have a low esteeme of themselves*: The examples are pregnant<sup>320</sup> in *Moses* <Exod. 3.13<sup>321</sup>>, *Gideon* <Judg. 6.15>, *Abigail* <1 Sam. 25.24>, and the Centurion, who held himselfe not worthy that Christ should come under the rooffe [p. 192] of his house: so lowly thought he of himselfe.<sup>322</sup>

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<sup>318</sup> In referring to Syriac translation of the Bible, Bernard shows his scholarly appreciation of this early and accurate source. See the Introduction section 4.1.

<sup>319</sup> See Job 42.7.

<sup>320</sup> 'pregnant': 'compelling, cogent, convincing; clear, obvious.' (OEDO).

<sup>321</sup> The correct reference is Exod. 3.11.

<sup>322</sup> See Luke 7.6-7.

Because they know and feele their infirmities,<sup>323</sup> they have overmastered pride and selfe-love, they acknowledge that in themselves, that is, in their flesh, dwelleth no good, and therefore they thinke and speake of themselves very humbly. Which grace we must labour for: for it will procure love, yea honour: for he that humbleth himselfe, shall be exalted <Prov. 22.4 and 15.33>. Now, the true signes of such as be lowly in their owne eyes, are these. First, they thinke better of others than of themselves, as *Ruth* doth here, and as men should doe <Phil. 2.3>. Secondly, they be loth to undertake great and high matters, as *Moses* to goe to *Pharoah*, and to bring Israel out of Egypt <Exod. 3.11>; and *David* to be *Sauls* sonne in law <1 Sam. 18.23>. Thirdly, if they be advanced, they receive honour with great humilitie, as *Abigail* did <1 Sam. 25.41>. Fourthly, in their high place and prosperity they be not of a proud and hautie spirit, as we may see in *Joseph*, *Moses*, *David*, *Ester* ruled by *Mordecai*, and in the Apostle Saint *Paul*. Fifthly, they scorne no duety, though meane, if it be a duety for them to doe. *Abraham* the Uncle will intreat peace at the hands of his Nephew *Lot* <Gen. 13.8>; If *Dathan* and *Abiram* scorne to come to *Moses*, he will goe out to them <Num. 16.12, 25<sup>324</sup>>: they stand not upon their place, so as they neglect what is fit to be done. Which justly reproveth those which have too high an esteeme of themselves: which pride ariseth, First, of an overweaning of themselves of their owne gifts, or what they thinke to be good in them. Secondly, by onely looking upon the [p. 193] good in them, and what by their place and birth they may clayme, but not at all of the evils in themselves, by which they have cause to be cast downe. And thirdly, by comparing themselves either with their inferiours, or with their equals, upon whom yet they cannot looke with an equall eye, but with

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<sup>323</sup> 'infirmity': 'A weakness, flaw, defect in a person's character.' (OEDO).

<sup>324</sup> Bernard's use of this passage seems inappropriate. Moses is being wrathful, not modest.

some better esteeme of themselves, by some one thing or other, wherein they would find themselves to excell them; but they never looke upon their superiours, except with the eye of envie, nor upon any in that wherein they be overmatched, which maketh them so proud: the true signes whereof are these; First, they highly esteeme of themselves, and very meanely of others, and that often of their betters, as did *Gaal* <Judg. 9.28-9>. Secondly, they have aspiring spirits, and thinke themselves worthy of higher places, as *Adam* and *Eve*,<sup>325</sup> *Absalom*,<sup>326</sup> with *Corah* and his company.<sup>327</sup> Thirdly, they are in prosperity impatient, and cannot endure the neglect of duety towards them, which they looke for, as *Haman* <Esth. 3.5 and 5.9>. Lastly, they disdaine to be at command of their betters, as did *Dathan* and *Abiram* <Num. 16.12>, and *Hagar* to be in subjection to her Mistresse <Gen. 16<sup>328</sup>>: for they thinke themselves, as good as others.

*Question.* Here it may be asked *how Ruth was unlike to Boaz handmaidens?*

*Answer.* It is thought shee so spake, because shee was not an Israelitish borne, one within the Covenant and of Gods people, but a Moabitish woman, of an idolatrous kindred, and incestuous race.<sup>329</sup> In which respect she might well thinke her selfe inferiour to them: for *the children of the [p. 194] Church are more excellent than any other people whatsoever.* *David* therefore held it better to be a dorekeeper

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<sup>325</sup> See Gen. 3.5.

<sup>326</sup> See 2 Sam. 15.4.

<sup>327</sup> See Num. 16.1-3. 'Korah' is the spelling in the AV.

<sup>328</sup> Specifically, verses 4-5.

<sup>329</sup> See Gen. 19.36-7. Here, Bernard accepts the charges made against the Moabites, although, as on pp. 151-2, 153, he does not mention the prohibition that Israelites were not to marry them. In concluding the passage, he explains that Ruth was an exception in that she was a convert (which is his explanation of why she could marry Boaz on pp. 28, 401).

Bernard is evidently indebted to Lavater who similarly observes that Ruth thought she was unlike Boaz's maidens because she was of Gentile origin (Lavater 72r). However, in commenting that Ruth could have been right to see herself as inferior, he goes beyond Lavater, who only says that Ruth thought herself unworthy. Topsell avoids the issue by interpreting Ruth's words as meaning that she was unworthy of Boaz's courtesy because she came to labour for herself and not for him as his maidens did (126, see also 128-9).

in Gods house, than to dwell in the Tents of the ungodly;<sup>330</sup> and *Moses* judged the Israelites in affliction more happy, then the Egyptians and himselfe in *Pharaoes* court;<sup>331</sup> for the Churches children are Gods Children, when all other are but his servants; they are in the covenant of God, the other strangers; they have spirituall gifts communicated to them, the other enjoy but temporall favours: they are highly esteemed of God, and bought with a price,<sup>332</sup> when the other are accounted but as whelps,<sup>333</sup> as Christ spake to the Canaanitish woman,<sup>334</sup> and are left in their spirituall captivity; they have Angels for their guard, and commanded to attend upon them, the other have not so: Lastly, they have inheritance in Heaven, but the wicked shall goe into Hell, and all the people which forget God. And therefore in this respect *Ruth* might speake truely, though now shee was become a Proselyte, and so was to be held as one of the Lords people.

Verse 14. *And Boaz said unto her, At meale time come thou hither, and eate of the bread, and dip thy morsell in the vineger. And shee sate besides the Reapers: and he reached<sup>335</sup> her parched corne, and shee did eate, and was sufficed, and left.*

The last words of *Boaz* in this first conference with *Ruth*, still expressing more and more his love unto her. First, in calling her to their victuals. Then, in giving her some himselfe, even [p. 195] so much, as was sufficient for the present, and more

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<sup>330</sup> See Ps. 84.10.

<sup>331</sup> Bernard may be thinking of Exod. 16.2-8. There is no direct reference but the sentiment expressed by Bernard is implicit in this biblical narrative.

<sup>332</sup> See 1 Cor. 6.20; 1 Cor. 7.23.

<sup>333</sup> 'whelp': 'The young of the dog.' (OEDO).

<sup>334</sup> See Matt. 15.26.

<sup>335</sup> 'reach': 'to give, yield, render; to grant, bestow, communicate.' (OEDO).

also: for shee left thereof.<sup>336</sup> So here *Boaz* inviteth her to dine with them; then shee sitteth downe, he welcommeth her, and shee eateth and is sufficed.

*And Boaz said unto her.*] The more thankfull she shewed her selfe, the more favour she found: for *thankfulnessse and humilitie increase favour*, as we see here:<sup>337</sup> Which two vertues are so lovely, as they draw the liking of all men unto them: humilitie graceth a mans person, and another thinketh himselfe honoured by a humble carriage towards him, and thanks is the praising of his goodnesse, and an acknowledgement of being beholden, which doe much move mens hearts unto kindnesse and favour: very thankfull was Saint *Paul* <Phil. 4.15>, and so was *David* to them which did them good <1 Sam. 30.26<sup>338</sup>>: whose examples we must follow.

*At meale time come thou hither.*] *Boaz* knew her to be poore, and therefore he helpeth every way to supply her wants; in the field for the present, but he leaveth her to her labour, to provide for afterwards. And thus *the poore are to be sustained in their present wants so, as they may yet follow their calling, and labour therein.*<sup>339</sup> In saying at *Meale time*, it noteth that *there were set times to eate, and preparation made for it*. And so indeed do good housholders, as we see in the commendations of the good huswife <Prov. 31.15>: for this argueth a care and love to servants, and also preventeth their lingring in their labour, when they need not murmure for their

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<sup>336</sup> Bernard's explanation here echoes Topsell's exposition of this verse (Topsell 129). However, Bernard chooses not to follow Topsell's emphasis upon Boaz giving food to Ruth with his own hands (an emphasis itself possibly derived from the Jewish commentators via Nicholas of Lyra, see MET 60). Whereas Topsell concludes from this that Boaz showed that he did not promise much and perform little, Bernard, following Lavater, highlights Boaz's civility (Lavater 76r).

<sup>337</sup> Bernard's claim that thankfulness and humility increase favour resembles his reinforcement of his encouragement of loving speech by pointing out the favourable reaction it brings about in others (138, 292-3). He returns to the reward of humility on pp. 265-6.

<sup>338</sup> This verse relates that David sent spoil to the elders of Judah, his friends, as a present. Verse 31 reveals that this was an expression of gratitude for assistance to him when he was fleeing from Saul.

<sup>339</sup> Bernard sets out a case for relieving the poor in such a way as they are kept in labour on pp. 208-9. See also the Introduction section 3.



dyet,<sup>340</sup> nor long waite for it.<sup>341</sup> This care should be in the Governours of families, which reproveth, First, such [p. 196] as can call upon their servants to set them to worke, but are too negligent in preparing food for them, wholesome and sufficient. Secondly, such as doe provide, but not in due season. Thirdly, such as will provide in time, but will hardly allow them time to eate, for hastening them to their worke.<sup>342</sup> But these cause servants to pocket, to steale, to have their secret meetings to the great damage of the family, and so make good that which *Salomon* saith, *There is that withholdeth more then is meete, but it tendeth to poverty* <Prov. 11.24>. This also is contrary to that precept in some sort, *Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the Oxe, which treadeth out the corne* <Deut. 25.4<sup>343</sup>>. And it is contrary to the condition of such as be godly: for such a one is mercifull to his beast <Prov. 12.10>, then much more to his servant.

*And eate of the bread, and dip thy morsell in the vinegar.*] Here is their houshold fare and harvest mens feeding: they had bread of wheat <1 Kings 5.11>, but the usuall was of barley, being most commonly mentioned, Judg. 7.13; 2 Kings 4.42; Josh. 6.9,<sup>344</sup> as the ordinary bread. Vineger was used in hot countreyes, both to stirre up appetite, and to quench thirst; they used also oyle, 1 Kings 5.11. In Italy they used in harvest to mingle vineger and wine and water together <Lavater in hunc

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<sup>340</sup> 'diet': 'An allowance or provision of food.' (OEDO).

<sup>341</sup> Again, Bernard points out the advantages to be gained by an individual by engaging in the conduct he is calling for.

<sup>342</sup> These categories of reprobable householders and their servants' consequent stealing from them derive from Lavater (74v). However, Bernard develops Lavater's third category, of those who take it in evil part if their servants eat sufficient. Lavater explains this merely by reference to Prov. 23 [6-8], which observes that the host's heart is not with his guest. Bernard here shows his ability to explain his source (here, Lavater) in such a way as to address a specific behaviour of which he disapproves (here, inconsideration in masters).

<sup>343</sup> This verse, which is paraphrased by Lavater, was used by Paul to demonstrate that the human labourer also deserves his hire in 1 Cor. 9.9-10 and 1 Tim. 5.18. (Ryrie, *Ryrie Study Bible* 316).

<sup>344</sup> The correct reference is John 6.9.

*locum*.<sup>345</sup>; this fare, provided for *Boaz* family, he allowed *Ruth* to eate of. For *a mercifull man will not onely relieve the poore abroad, but sometimes at home with the food of his family*, as *Job* did <Job 31.17-18>. He limits not his goodnesse, but is ready to helpe as he seeth occasion, and as the poore shall stand in need <Neh. 5.18>. Let the rich then this way relieve the poore <Luke 14.13-14>, (and not play the *Nabals* part <1 Sam. 25.11>) [p. 197] if reason so require. Note againe here, what *homely and plaine fare the godly in former times were contented to live with* usually. See this in *Abraham* his intertainment, Bread, Butter, Milke and Veale; he runneth to fetch the Calfe himselfe; *Sarah* bakes the Cakes, and the man dresseth the Calfe, for which the strangers stay.<sup>346</sup> Poore feeding had the Prophets; though *Elisha* bade set on the great pot <2 Kings 4.38>, it was but homely fare. They were not so dainty-toothed as now men be, which can eate nothing but what is finely cookt. The first sweet tooth that in Scripture I doe reade of, was old *Isaac*; hee loved savourie meate, which *Esau* provided for him <Gen. 27.4>; in whom hee tooke such pleasure for his venison and sweet meates, that he would have turned the blessing due to *Jacob*, upon him, which that prophane *Esau* had formerly sold for a messe of pottage, in the sale of his birth-right.<sup>347</sup> The godly should not eate for the palate, and to please appetite, but to preserve nature, which is contented with a little, and wholesome, though it want the daintie cooking. Hungrie stomacks, and bodies well laboured, will not much care for sawce; this daintinesse ariseth of idlenesse, and too much plentie, which doe breed diseases, and shorten life in many. Let these nice<sup>348</sup>

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<sup>345</sup> 'Lavater respecting this place.' See Lavater 73v.

<sup>346</sup> See Gen. 18.5-8.

<sup>347</sup> See Gen. 25.29-34. Bernard's case for puritan plain eating is given moral weight by his citing a biblical instance of an individual being tempted to do wrong in order to satisfy a hankering after delicacies.

<sup>348</sup> 'nice': 'Fastidious, fussy, difficult to please, esp. with regard to food or cleanliness; of refined or dainty tastes.' (OEDO).

stomakes know, that *Esau*, who no doubt fed daintily, that could provide so well for his father; yet when he came once home hungrie, could bee glad of hunters fare, and sup up a messe a pottage: such a delicate Cooke is Hunger, which can season and make savourie very homely cheere. They [p. 198] that despise plaine feeding, and love to fare delicately every day, must remember, that it was the practice of him that went to hell, he fared deliciously every day <Luke 16.1<sup>349</sup>>. This hardens the heart of such, not to regard the poore, as it did his. This is chargeable, and bringeth unto povertie <Prov. 21.16<sup>350</sup>>, and with-holdeth men from doing good works: for three things have destroyed charitie among us in rich men and Gentlemen, as they be called, to wit, costly buildings, costly rayment, and costly fare. Lastly, this engendreth lust, whence follow many enormities in them which follow idlenesse, one of the sinnes of Sodom <Ezek. 16<sup>351</sup>>. This moderate feeding, and homely wholesome fare, which formerly men were content to feed upon, may reprove the daintinesse of servants, which now adayes will hardly bee content with such fare in their Masters service, as when after comming to their owne hand, they would bee glad of the worst bit thereof: but thus it is when men know not when they be well, neither understand what it is to bee maintained of others, till they come to find themselves.

*And she sate besides the reapers.*] She did not impudently thrust in her selfe amongst them, but modestly tooke place somewhere besides them. Whose example teacheth, that *free favours are to be modestly received of the poore*. It is civilitie, it is a vertue praise-worthy. And therefore let the poore learne modesty, learne to carry

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<sup>349</sup> The correct reference is Luke 16.19.

<sup>350</sup> The correct reference is Prov. 22.16.

<sup>351</sup> Specifically, verse 49.

themselves as they ought, they shall procure more favour then the impudent, and the unmannerly beggers.<sup>352</sup>

[p. 199] *And he reached her parched corne:*] That is, corne steept and dried, and made for to eate; this wee reade of elsewhere also, as a common food, 1 Sam. 17.17 and 2 Sam. 17.28; Lev. 23.14 <Josh. 5.11>. This was of the best food at the table; this kind of food was presented to *David* and his followers <2 Sam. 17.28>; and the same carried by him from his father to his brethren, an Ephah of it <1 Sam. 17.17>: so *Abigail* brought to *David* five measures hereof <1 Sam. 25.18>, and of this *Boaz* giveth to *Ruth*, noting his kind courtesie to her: for *it is a note of respect, when the Master of the table reacheth of that which is before him unto others*. So did *Elkanah* to *Hannah*, whom he specially loved <1 Sam. 1.4<sup>353</sup>>; yea, sometime thus did our Saviour to his Disciples <Luke 24.30; John 21.30<sup>354</sup>>, which men doe now follow, but oftner therein shewing their owne good manners, as it is accounted, then making it the token of love; which by these things now in this complementing age cannot bee discerned. Observe hence further, that *a godly rich man can be content, that the godly poore taste of the best of that which is before him*: for such he knoweth are neere to him in Christ, and deare to God his Father. He gave not to *Ruth* what hee would have given to his dogs, or what is hardly fit for dogs, or good for none but for dogs. Many indeed give to their dogs what might be fit for the poore: (an evill sin under the Sunne, which may cause them or theirs to want:) and other give onely to the poore, what else they would give their dogs, by a too base estimation of their poore brethren; such gifts are not esteemed of God, though hee say, that [p. 200]

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<sup>352</sup> Lavater here simply says that good turns should be accepted modestly (75r). Bernard provides an incentive for such modesty: it will procure favour.

<sup>353</sup> The correct reference is 1 Sam. 1.5.

<sup>354</sup> The correct reference is John 21.13.

what is given to them, is lent to him: but it must bee an Almes beseeming them, and fit for a Christian to give to a man, and not unto a dog.<sup>355</sup>

*And she did eat, and was satisfied, and left.*] As she sate downe to eate, being bidden, so she did eate as much as did suffice, and left. Which sheweth, first, her *plentie*, which is a blessing of God, to have enough to suffice nature; for so God promiseth to his <Deut. 11.15; Lev. 25.5;<sup>356</sup> Ps. 37.3>. Now, this blessing stands in three things; first, in health with a good stomake, that nature may receive food for nourishment: secondly, in competencie<sup>357</sup> of food, and wholesome withall: thirdly, in Gods blessing of the same received, that it may strengthen us: none of these can bee wanting to the necessarie preservation of life: for stomake without food, food without health and stomake, and both without Gods blessing, are not able to save life; where therefore they concurre, men have cause to blesse God: so much for the *plentie*. In the next is shewed her moderation: shee ate not to satietie, but what was sufficient: for *moderate feeders eate only to content nature*; and that is sufficient which refresheth the body, and keepeth it apt for labour, and not that which satisfieth the unruly appetite, but over-chargeth<sup>358</sup> nature. This teacheth us to eate what may suffice, and be thankfull to God; two extremes are to be avoided: the one is such abstinence, whereby sufficient food is not received to sustaine life; either of a foolish devotion, as some formerly have done;<sup>359</sup> or else of a desperate neglect of life, [p.

<sup>355</sup> Bernard here extends Lavater's comment that often dogs and cats eat the things which masters would not give to workmen (74v).

<sup>356</sup> The correct reference is Lev. 25.19.

<sup>357</sup> 'competency': 'A sufficient supply; a sufficiency of.' (OEDO).

<sup>358</sup> 'overcharge': 'To load, fill, or supply to excess (with something); to overload, overburden; to overstock, overfill.' (OEDO).

<sup>359</sup> Bernard here appears to condemn excessive fasting. Fasting was an important element in puritan life (see Webster, *Godly Clergy*). However, this practice, taken to extremes, could cause concern to other clergy than Bernard. John Ley, in his life of Jane Ratcliffe, observes of her that '*the devotion of her soule defrauded her body of due refreshing, and brought a weakness upon it by her often fasting and religious labours*, which gave me occasion to suspect and to prophecie (as some who heare mee this day can tell) that her zeale would eate her up, and that her emphaticall soule would not long bee

201] which is the murdering of a mans selfe. The other is excesse, which is the sinne of gluttony, overcharging nature, which sinne is forbidden in Scripture: it breedeth securitie<sup>360</sup> in the heart, and diseases in the body, and so shortneth life <Luke 21.34; Rom. 13.13>. Such a one as is so given to this sinne, is a belly-god <Phil. 3<sup>361</sup>>; he is like the Horse-leech, which sucks till it can draw blood no longer, but is ready to burst: He is like the Fish called Onos,<sup>362</sup> or the Asse-fish,<sup>363</sup> which hath the heart in the belly; so is this man set all on his panch. Hee is like the beast called Gulon,<sup>364</sup> a name answerable to his nature, which eateth that which hee preyeth upon, if it bee a horse, till all be devoured, ever filling his belly, and then emptying it, and then falling to it againe, till all bee consumed: such a delight hath he in his appetite <Gesner<sup>365</sup>>. And such beast-like men there have been, who having filled their belly, have for the greedy desire and unsatiableness of their appetite, in variety of dishes and delicacies, wished their backe a belly. Such Gulons may from this beast behold themselves, how like him they bee; but I may say, how worse they bee; for he is a beast, and doth but like himselfe; but these bee men having reason to guide, and should have Religion to bridle their devouring nature, and brutish appetite. Lastly, note that *Ruth* left of that which was given her, which she also reserved to give unto her Mother in law, as it followes after in verse 18.

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kept downe out of heaven, nor her feeble body long held up above the earth'. (*A Patterne of Pietie* (1640) 79).

<sup>360</sup> 'security': 'culpable absence of anxiety, carelessness' (*OEDO*).

<sup>361</sup>: Specifically verse 19.

<sup>362</sup> 'ono': 'The wahoo fish, *Acanthocybium solandri*' (*OEDO*).

<sup>363</sup> 'ass-fish': '𩺰𩺰𩺰𩺰 ass', fish of the cod family (*OEDO*).

<sup>364</sup> 'gulon': 'Formerly, the glutton, *Gulo luscus*: now, the name of the genus to which this animal belongs.' (*OEDO*).

<sup>365</sup> Konrad von Gesner, 1516-1565, occupied the chair of Natural History in Zurich ([?]1541-1565). The reference is to the *Historia Animalium*, 1551. Topsell relied on this book in his most popular publications, which were about animals (Lewis, *ODNB*) The *OEDO* quotes Topsell in its entry on 'gulon': '1607 *TOPSELL Four-f. Beasts* (1658) 205 Of the Gulon. This Beast was not known by the Ancients, but hath been since discovered in the Northern parts of the World.' Perhaps Bernard's attention was drawn to natural history by Topsell's work and the fact that he cites Gesner rather than Topsell is an implicit criticism of the latter's lack of originality.

Verse 15. *And when she was risen up to gleane, [p. 202] Boaz commanded his yong men, saying, Let her gleane even among the sheaves, and reproach her not.*

Ruths returne to her labour is here set downe, and her encouragement in the same by *Boaz* his love, who charged his servants to give her leave to gleane, and that among the sheaves, and not reproach her for so doing.

Before I come to the words, here it may be demanded, *Whether there was giving of thanks*, seeing there sitting downe, and there arising up to labour is mentioned, but not this duety of thanksgiving, and prayer to God for a blessing upon their food ?

*Answer.* We are to thinke they did, though not here noted: for every thing is not written which there was done; as *Ruths* thanks for her food, which we cannot thinke shee omitted, who before did shew her selfe every way so thankfull.<sup>366</sup> And there are such reasons to perswade us that *Boaz* would not neglect this duety, as we may easily admit his giving of thanks. First, his owne godlinesse and knowledge of his duety; and then the commandement of God, Deut. 8.10, which he could not be ignorant of, and of which no doubt he made conscience. Therefore let not any from hence gather a loose<sup>367</sup> liberty to neglect this duety, because the holy Writer mentioneth it not, but learne from other places to know it to be their duety. It was a custome among Christians, as at this day with us; there is a commandement to glorifie God in eating and drinking <1 Cor. 10.30-1>. The crea- [p. 203] tures of God are to be received with thanksgiving, and are sanctified by the Word of God and

<sup>366</sup> Here, Bernard infers Ruth's actions from the image he has already constructed of her. It will be seen that in chapter 3, he struggles to maintain her image on account of her conduct in this chapter.

<sup>367</sup> 'loose': 'Free from moral restraint; lax in principle, conduct, or speech' (OEDO).

prayer <1 Tim. 4.3, 5>. And holy men have used it; *Samuel* <1 Sam. 9.13>, Saint *Paul*: yea when he and the people had long fasted, yet ate hee not before grace <Acts 27.35>. Our blessed Saviour, the innocent Lambe of God, spotlesse and sinlesse, yet ate not, but first gave thanks <John 6.11, 23>. It therefore is our duety, and befitting all, before they receive food, to give thanks: For what can our meate doe without Gods blessing? How soone have some beene choaked, and have ended their dayes suddainely? And doe we not remember, that the Israelites perished with meate in their mouthes?<sup>368</sup> Neither let this duety be put off to children, as if it were too meane a duety for the Master of the table. Were it not grosly ridiculous, and a very scornfull part, for a man to receive a favour from a King, and then call his child to give him thanks? Our Saviour put not this off to another, nor *Samuel*, nor *Paul*: are they not worthy imitation?<sup>369</sup>

*And when shee was risen up to gleane.*] The History turneth againe to *Ruth*, and sheweth what shee did after her repast, and the liberall feeding allowed her by *Boaz*: she betooke her selfe to gleaning againe, and returned to her former labour. Whence we may learne, I. That *the godly poore, by their favours received, and helps in their need, are not the more negligent, but the rather the more painefull in their labours*, as may be seene here in *Ruth*. For they know that such helps are for to stirre them up to well-doing, which use they make of them, [p. 204] and not to live idly, as many doe, who are not worthy to eate <2 Thess. 3<sup>370</sup>>. The poore are to follow

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<sup>368</sup> See Num. 11.33.

<sup>369</sup> In considering whether thanks were given to God for the food before expounding the lemmata of verse 15, Bernard follows Topsell (*Topsell* 132-3). Topsell similarly notes that it is not stated whether Ruth thanked Boaz himself for her food - an example of the Scripture's not making every detail explicit. However, Bernard does not focus on Ruth's giving thanks to God as Topsell does, who evidently has in mind Ruth's eating specifically. Bernard emphasises the responsibility of the master to give thanks for food. Furthermore, he draws attention to the need for God's blessing on his people's food.

<sup>370</sup> Specifically, verses 6-15.



*Ruths* steps, and learne for the mercies of men towards them, to continue painefull in their calling.<sup>371</sup> II. That *the true use and end of receiving food, is to strengthen our bodies to preserve them in labour* <Eccles. 10.17>. *Ruth* eateth to suffice nature to returne to worke. The Apostle joyneth eating and labour together, neither would he eate the bread of idlenesse <2 Thess. 3.10, 8>; nor the good woman, commended in the Proverbs <Prov. 31.27>. God would not allow the sole Monarch of all the whole earth, no not in innocencie, when the Earth brought forth without labour, to eate without paines-taking; he must dresse the Garden. Food is the reward of labour of such as be able, and it is a blessing to eate the labour of our hands <Ps. 128.2>. Therefore such are here reprov'd, which rise up to eate and drinke, and doe eate and drinke to rise up and play, or prate, or sleep, or to runne to playes,<sup>372</sup> to fulfill their lust; to decke themselves like wantons, the sonnes and daughters of *Belial*, of *Jezabel*.<sup>373</sup> some be *Cains* race, and eate to be vagabonds, going up and downe begging;<sup>374</sup> some of *Esaus* race, and eate to hunt and hawke, till they have sold their inheritance for a messe of pottage, and themselves be lesse worth than one meale, which they before bestowed upon their dogs; these should know that they are borne to labour, and that godly men and women have so bestowed their time; yea Jesus Christ himselfe lived in a calling painefully.<sup>375</sup>

<sup>371</sup> Regarding Bernard's repeated emphasis on keeping the poor labouring whilst relieving them see the Introduction section 3.

<sup>372</sup> Bernard's disapproval of plays is typical of puritans and Topsell makes a similar observation (Topsell 133). Bernard mentions plays and play-houses as wickedness on p. 213.

<sup>373</sup> See 2 Kings 9.30.

<sup>374</sup> See Gen. 4.14. Bernard turns Cain's lament into a condemnation of the 'idle poor' in his own time.

<sup>375</sup> See Mark 6.3. Jesus was a carpenter.

This second lesson is an example of how the later early modern commentators developed a point made by Lavater who simply declares that Ruth is not like those who refuse to labour when they are full (76r-76v). Topsell introduces the lesson that eating and drinking have the function of enabling people to follow their vocations, and gives a rendering of Eccles. 10.17 (133). Although Topsell also refers to Ezek. 16.53 (the correct reference is Ezek. 16.49), which is not cited by Bernard, Bernard's chief contribution is to provide further biblical references and allusions to biblical characters. Bernard omits Topsell's singling out of serving men as particularly culpable of misuse of eating and drinking, perhaps because this did not seem to be an issue when he was writing his commentary.

*Boaz commanded his yong men, saying, Let her [p. 205] gleane even among the sheaves.]* What *Ruth* desired, verse the seventh, here *Boaz* alloweth her, when he saw her so well given<sup>376</sup> and so painefull. So we see how *the godly diligent hand obtaineth favour and a blessing* <Prov. 13.4>: as appeareth in *Ruth* here; and in *Jacob*, whose paines the Lord rewarded abundantly <Gen. 31<sup>377</sup>>. This is taught in the Parable of the talent, in which the stocke of the diligent is increased <Matt. 25<sup>378</sup>>. For God hath thus promised to doe;<sup>379</sup> and labour is a meanes appointed of God to get his blessings <Prov. 13.4>, who also openeth the heart of the rich to doe good to the poore which labour painefully. Would we have supply of our wants? Would we have earthly blessings? Then must we labour and take paines.<sup>380</sup> Of gathering among the sheaves, see verse the seventh.<sup>381</sup> *Boaz* here is not onely content that shee should gather, by, or besides, but betweene the sheaves, where more plentifull gathering was of eares and scattered corne;<sup>382</sup> it was more then a common favour, an argument of his speciall love. The rich are to be mercifull, yet may they extend their bounty, as they shall like, to one more than to another, as they shall thinke fitting. Of which before on verse 7.<sup>383</sup>

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<sup>376</sup> ‘well(-)given’: ‘Well-disposed.’ (OEDO).

<sup>377</sup> Specifically, verses 7-12.

<sup>378</sup> Specifically, verses 14-28.

<sup>379</sup> See Prov. 10.4.

<sup>380</sup> Bernard reiterates his emphasis on the poor labouring in order to merit relief. See the Introduction section 3.

<sup>381</sup> See p. 154.

<sup>382</sup> This is a modification of Bernard’s explanation of gathering among the sheaves on p. 154. Now he indicates a greater privilege – Ruth was not restricted to gleaning by the sheaves but may glean between them. Bernard also later explains Boaz’s command to his young men to let fall some of the handfuls on purpose for Ruth (206). In making these explanations, he shows precisely how Ruth’s gleaning differed from the customary practice to which he exhorts compliance on p. 136, citing Deuteronomy. That he does so illustrates how important the extent to which Ruth infringed gleaning custom was to him despite his emphasis on Boaz’s generosity.

<sup>383</sup> See p. 155.

*And reproach her not;]* or as the marginall reading is, *shame her not.*<sup>384</sup> From these words note, I. *Yong men are apt to offer injurie, and to reproach the poore women, widdowes, and strangers;* else *Boaz* would not have given them this charge, but that he knew their wanton<sup>385</sup> behaviour by nature, and how the Jewes tooke libertie to use their speeches against such strangers, especially, perhaps, when [p. 206] they saw her better respected then their owne countrie women. II. That *reproching is to put shame upon one*, therefore is such a word here used, as may be translated either way <kalam>. III. That *goodnesse and mercy stands not onely in doing good, but also in preventing evill*, as much as lyeth in us: both is here done by *Boaz*, as is also before noted out of verse 9.<sup>386</sup>

Verse 16. *And let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them, that she may gleane them, and rebuke her not.*

*Boaz* speech continued to his servants, touching his liberality towards *Ruth*, who thought it not enough to let her gleane among the sheaves (for that he knew she would not filch nor steale out of them,) but he commandeth his servants, that they should of purpose let fall handfuls for her to gather, and not rebuke her for so doing. So here is *Boaz* charge, with the end why, and also a forbidding of them to rebuke her.

*And let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her.]* As they reaped, they cut by handfuls, and thereof made sheaves, of which handfuls they should let some fall, as they were reaping, or else some of them, as they were binding up the sheaves,

<sup>384</sup> Bernard refers to the marginal note in the AV placed before 'reproach', 'Heb. *shame her not.*'

<sup>385</sup> 'wanton': 'Reckless of decorum.' (OEDO).

<sup>386</sup> See pp. 165-7.

which is the more likely. Howsoever it was, we may note, I. That *a mercifull man and a godly man is frank-hearted*<sup>387</sup> *to the godly poore, such as bee painefull and deserve love.* This is evident in *Boaz*, whose mercifull kindnesse is many wayes [p. 207] set forth; hee spake to her in a loving appellation, calling her, Daughter; he admitted her to his table, as one of his family; he praised her vertues, and prayed for her; he bound his servants to the good behaviour towards her, to prevent injurie which might be offered to her; and hee also did give to her, and that both freely without asking, and largely without niggardly sparing. Now a good man is mooved, as *Boaz* to this, because hee conceiveth the miserie of another with a fellow-feeling; hee placeth himselfe in their stead, and considereth his own frailtie, the worlds mutabilitie, and that he may stand in need, if God should lay his hand upon him: lastly, he knoweth that God loveth a cheerefull giver. Therefore here let us in our charitie towards the godly, imitate this blessed *Boaz*, shew our love in words, in deeds, in doing good, in preventing evill every way; and what wee doe, to doe it freely, and bountifully. Many will not give, as being altogether mercilesse: but let them remember the threatning of *James* <Jas. 2.13>. Many wil give, but not largely, nor freely without importuning, though they be able, and their brethren stand in need.

II. Note, *that servants are not to give what is their Masters, without his warrant:* for *Boaz* here alloweth them to give her; and without this warrant, it had not been lawfull for them to have thus left her handfulls of corne: for servants are but trusted with, or amongst their Masters goods; they are not disposers<sup>388</sup> of them; the disposing<sup>389</sup> is at the pleasure of the Owner, and not of [p. 208] the servants, which have no right in them at all. Those servants therefore which will take upon them to give of their

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<sup>387</sup> 'frank': 'Liberal, bounteous, generous, lavish, *esp.* in dealing with money.' (OEDO).

<sup>388</sup> 'disposer': 'One who disposes of something' (OEDO).

<sup>389</sup> 'dispose': 'To bestow, make over, hand over; to deal out, dispense, distribute' (OEDO).

Masters goods, under pretence of charity, or what else, are to be reproved <Gen. 31.33<sup>390</sup>>: for it is theft so to doe, without the will of the Owner; and the gift so given, under what shew soever, is not acceptable to God: for men must give of their owne, and not be liberal upon other mens estates.<sup>391</sup>

*And leave them that she may gleane them.*] Here it may be asked, Why did not *Boaz* rather give her a quantitie of corne, and so send her home, rather then to let her abide in the fields to gleane? Because he would so relieve her, as yet hee would keepe her in labour, and not maintaine her in idlenesse. And this is *the best charitie, so to relieve the poore, as we keepe them in labour*. It benefits the giver, to have them labour; it benefits the common-weale, to suffer no Droanes,<sup>392</sup> nor to nourish any in idlenesse; and it benefits the poore themselves, it keepes them in health, it discovers them to bee idle or painefull; if painefull, it procureth them favour: and lastly, it keepeth them from idlenesse, and so from a sea of wickednesse, which the lazie persons are subject to, and run into, as the vagrant poore giveth us sufficiently to know, which dwell among us, or rather rogue<sup>393</sup> up and downe without dwelling, or certaine abode. Let therefore men thus relieve the poore with *Boaz*; and if men would spare from excesse of apparell, daintie fare, idle expences in keeping Hawkes [p. 209] and Hounds, in following unthrifitie gaming, and such like, and lay up that to charitable uses, to set the poore on worke, what singular good might be done! the poore would cease to complaine, and the rich themselves would be better for it.<sup>394</sup>

<sup>390</sup> The reference is to Rachel's successful theft of Laban's teraphim (god images), and seems an inappropriate illustration of the point Bernard is making. It might seem more appropriate to refer to 2 Kings 5.20-7. Bernard refers to this passage on p. 159 with respect to lying for gain.

<sup>391</sup> Here, Bernard comments further on the roles of masters and servants (see the Introduction section 3), specifically, the consequences of the exclusive ownership by the master of his property.

<sup>392</sup> 'drone': 'A non-worker; a lazy idler, a sluggard.' (OEDO).

<sup>393</sup> 'rogue': 'To wander idly about after the manner of rogues; to live like a rogue or vagrant; also, in later use, to play the rogue or rascal.' (OEDO).

<sup>394</sup> Bernard's suggestion that Boaz thought Ruth would find it more acceptable to labour to gather the corn adapts Lavater's exposition of this point (Lavater 77r). For Bernard, Boaz was imposing an

*And rebuke her not.]* This caveat he addeth, that they might not think his command, To let fall handfuls, was for triall of her; but that shee should carry away what they should so let fall, without check. Before, hee warned them not to reproch her, by giving her ill language;<sup>395</sup> and here hee will not have her to suffer rebuke at their hands, for taking what he shall allow her: for the *servant is not to find fault with any person, for receiving his Masters kindnesse*: he may dispose of his owne, and the servant is not to dislike with it, in checking the receiver, in whom there is no cause of rebuke, but rather in the evill eye of the servant, as our Saviour sheweth in the parable of the Vineyard <Matt. [20].15>.<sup>396</sup>

Verse 17. *So she gleaned in the field untill even, and beat out that she had gleaned; and it was about an Ephah of Barley.*

This sheweth the continuance of *Ruth* in her labour, till the end of the day: then, her beating out the corne, and what it by measure came unto: the scope to set out Gods blessing, her painefull travell,<sup>397</sup> and *Boaz* furtherance thereof, as is noted in the former verses, by allowing her to [p. 210] gleane amongst the sheaves, and commanding his servants to let fall handfuls for her to gather up.

*So shee gleaned in the field untill Even.]* *Ruth* abode in that same field, as *Boaz* advised; there she found kindnesse. *It is good abiding there, where we doe*

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obligation on Ruth to labour in return for her relief which reflects his own contemporary position. (see the Introduction section 3).

<sup>395</sup> See pp. 205-6.

<sup>396</sup> Here Bernard draws attention to the issue of infringement of the gleaning custom to which he refers on p. 136. However, Bernard's emphasis on the overriding importance of the master's kindness shows that he is particularly concerned with the value of Boaz's generosity. In this passage, Bernard further defines the hierarchical relations between masters and servants which he considers to be right (see the Introduction section 3).

<sup>397</sup> 'travel': 'Labour, toil' (OEDQ).

well. It is wantonnesse<sup>398</sup> to bee removing from thence, and not being in want, as many light<sup>399</sup> servants doe, who as rolling stones, which can never gather mosse, feelee want ere they be aware. *Ruth* kept her selfe there where she was well; and so should others doe, and reape the fruit of wisdom and constancie: both which appeared in *Ruth* herein.<sup>400</sup> Note againe from her example of sedulitie,<sup>401</sup> that *such as love labour, take paines so long as they may*; all the day till night: for the day is the time of labour till the evening, as the Psalmist speaketh; *Man goeth out to his labour untill the Evening*.<sup>402</sup> *Ruth* rested not till the time of rest: for they that love labour, doe strengthen themselves to it, as *Salomon* speaketh of the good hous-wife <Prov. 31.17>. And this strengthening is thus; when they labour to come with a good will to worke; when they force their owne consciences thereto from the Commandement of God to labour; when they doe consider labour as the ordinarie meanes appointed, both to get an outward estate, and to preserve the same <Prov. 31.18>; and lastly, when they joy in the fruit of their labour, and reape the profit of their hands. Thus should wee strengthen our selves to take paines, as *Ruth* here did. So [p. 211] shall we eate the bread of our owne hands, as the Apostle exhorteth <1 Thess. 4.11>; which, as before I have noted,<sup>403</sup> is a blessed thing <2 Thess. 3.12; Ps. 128.1<sup>404</sup>>, and we shall not eate the bread of idlenesse, the bread which the good woman would not taste of <Prov. 31.27>; it is unsavorie to all that truely feare God, and walke as they should, in an honest calling. This diligence and constant labour of

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<sup>398</sup> 'wantonness': 'Caprice, whim.' (OEDO).

<sup>399</sup> 'light': 'Characterized by levity, frivolous, unthinking.' (OEDO).

<sup>400</sup> Bernard derives another lesson about the relations between masters and servants (see the Introduction section 3) from *Ruth*'s remaining in Boaz's field – servants should remain in settled employment.

<sup>401</sup> 'sedulity': 'The quality of being sedulous; painstaking attention to duty, diligent application, industry.' (OEDO).

<sup>402</sup> See Ps. 104.23.

<sup>403</sup> See p. 204.

<sup>404</sup> The correct reference is Ps. 128.2.

*Ruth*, checketh those which will not worke on the day, to have the sweet labouring mans rest in the night; not in health, to relieve themselves in sicknesse; not in youth, to maintaine old age; not in summer, for heat; not in winter, for cold: but rather as Droanes desire to live upon the sweat of other mens browes, not upon the labour of their owne hands, as God spake to *Adam* <Gen. 3<sup>405</sup>>. They also are here reprov'd, which will not be constant in labour, but worke onely by fits to supply present wants, and to have money to spend, not setting hand to labour while they have one penny, never providing for the time to come, but doe rest upon their present strength, to labour for supply of present wants, and no farther; whereby it commeth to passe, that in sicknesse and old age they must either bee relieved of others, or perish for hunger.<sup>406</sup>

*And beate out that shee had gleaned.*] Shee was both the Gleaner and the Thresher. Corne was beat out sometime by oxen, or horses treading, or by a wheele running upon it, or by a staffe, as here, or by the flaile, as now every where with us.<sup>407</sup> It was a meane course to gleane, but a meaner for [p. 212] her selfe to sit downe to beate out what shee had gleaned; and yet this shee did: before she went

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<sup>405</sup> Specifically, verse 19.

<sup>406</sup> In Bernard's scheme of charity people ought to make their own provision for times when they may incapacitated.

Bernard's lesson from Ruth's sedulity follows that of Lavater (78r, 78v, 79v-80r). However, he engages more directly with his readers in setting out how they should strengthen themselves to labour. He also develops Lavater's censure of those who are slothful and those who do not persist (78v, 79v-80r), by drawing attention to their detrimental effect on society.

<sup>407</sup> This explanation of threshing follows that of Lavater, drawn from the Scriptures and Pliny (Lavater 78r). Bernard goes on to derive a lesson from what he perceives to be the particularly menial nature of Ruth's task of threshing in which he attacks the upper classes for their reluctance to engage in honest labour. He returns to this attack in commenting on Boaz's winnowing barley in Chapter 3 (252-4). Although he was committed to maintaining the social hierarchy he makes radical recommendations to the wealthy in these instances and elsewhere in the commentary (as is noted in the Introduction section 3). Lavater and Topsell also make such radical recommendations regarding the wealthy. Labour by the wealthy is advocated by Lavater (96v-97r), and by Topsell (160-1, 176, 179), who relate this to Boaz's winnowing. By raising the issue at this earlier place in his commentary, Bernard makes his point with more emphasis. All three commentators demonstrate by their comments on the subject that they perceive elements of the simple society of Ruth to be preferable to the state of affairs in their own society.



home to her mother in law, whose house shee would not cumber,<sup>408</sup> nor trouble her old head with the noyse of the beating, shee would bring home all ready with her. Shee laboured more like a servant then a daughter in law, and yet she in love was more then a daughter in law; her service was beyond a servant in labour and travel, with diligence and faithfulness, and her love surpassed and exceeded the love of many naturall children. The thing principally here to be noted is, that *the godly, which indeed be truely humble, and painefull, refuse no honest kind of labour. Abel will keepe sheep;*<sup>409</sup> *Jacob will doe the like;*<sup>410</sup> *Sarah will bake cakes, even ordinary bread,*<sup>411</sup> not like the Apothecarie stuffe, such as our Ladies perhaps will put their hands unto, if their fingers be yet not too fine; *Rebecca will take a pitcher and fetch water, yea more, will draw for the Camels of a stranger out of courtesie;*<sup>412</sup> *Yea, Gideon will thrash;*<sup>413</sup> *Boaz will lie by his corne heape;*<sup>414</sup> *Ruth will beate out her corne; and the honorable woman will put her hand to the distaffe.*<sup>415</sup> The reasons are, because such have put on humilitie, which will refuse to doe nothing that is honest and lawfull; they know no dishonestie therein, and that it was held a vertue aforesaid to labour in such things, as the pride of our times judge base and contemptible, and themselves disgraced therein <*Vide Martin Bucer, de Regno Christi, liber 2, caput 48-9.*<sup>416</sup>>. By no meanes many in our age will labour, upon

<sup>408</sup> ‘cumber’: ‘To occupy obstructively, or inconveniently; to block up or fill with what hinders freedom of motion or action; to burden, load.’ (OEDO).

<sup>409</sup> See Gen. 4.2.

<sup>410</sup> See Gen 30.31-2; Gen. 31.38; Hos. 12.12.

<sup>411</sup> See Gen. 18.6.

<sup>412</sup> See Gen. 24.15-16, 19-20.

<sup>413</sup> See Judg. 6.11. Gideon is an example common to the *Ruth* commentators (*Lavater* 96v, *Topsell* 160) and Bernard returns to it below in this passage (214) and on p. 252.

<sup>414</sup> See Ruth 3.7.

<sup>415</sup> See Prov. 31.19.

<sup>416</sup> Martin Bucer’s *De Regno Christi* (*On the Kingdom of Christ*) was a Protestant treatise on social ethics informed by the author’s contact with English social reformers. In citing Bucer, Bernard can be seen to adhere to this English tradition. The book was written in 1550 for the young king, Edward VI. It was first published posthumously in Basel in 1557 (Bucer’s writings in England being together published in Basel in 1577), Bucer being declared a heretic in Mary’s reign. Ideas in the book may

any occasion in any common thing: they have (for- [p. 213] sooth) their reasons:<sup>417</sup> They alledge birth. But who better borne then *Cain* and *Abel*<sup>418</sup> the sonnes of the sole Monarch of the whole world? Christ Jesus by birth, as man, descended of Kings, and the King of Judah, yet was a Carpenter <Mark 6.3>: hee had birth to have boasted on, and he had power divine to have exempted him from labour, yet he would not doe so. King *Alphonsus*<sup>419</sup> doing something with his hands, and labouring so, as some which beheld him found fault, smiled and said, Hath God given hands to Kings in vaine? Yea the Grand Segnior<sup>420</sup> by his law, as I take it, is to doe daily some bodily worke with his owne hands, and that law they doe observe, to grace labour, and that labouring men should not become contemptible <*The great Lord of the Turkish Empire*>.<sup>421</sup> They will alledge, I meane our Gentlemen Idlers, that they have rich parents to maintaine them, that they need not worke. Yes, if not for

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have inspired Edward VI in the essay he wrote in 1551, 'Discourse on the Reformation of Abuses'. Although an influence of Bucer's *De Regno Christi* on Puritans is not evident according to his editor, Wilhelm Pauck (172-3), Bernard regards the book sufficiently authoritative to cite it. Perhaps his attention was drawn to the work by Edward's English essay. Chapter 48 of Book 2 of *De Regno Christi* deals with the need to educate youth to prevent idleness, which Bucer claims is prevalent in the realm and which he condemns. In chapter 49, Bucer again addresses idleness which is to be prevented by measures he proposes for economic development. In citing this chapter, Bernard evidently refers particularly to Bucer's focus on the nobility, where he calls on them to engage in manual labour if they cannot otherwise serve the state, as certain biblical and historical figures undertook such labour. That Bernard noted this focus is shown by his mention, on p. 253, in his later passage advocating manual labour in the wealthy, of one of Bucer's examples here, L. Quintus Cincinnatus.

<sup>417</sup> In proceeding to attribute objections to individuals who will not labour, Bernard develops Topsell's observation that many people would make it an unseemly thing for wealthy men to undertake menial labour (Topsell 160). Bernard uses the word 'unseemliness' in his exposition of Boaz's winnowing (252). By using the device of answering the objections Bernard is enabled to elaborate, to a greater extent than Topsell (Topsell 160-1), the faults of these individuals. He can supply further examples of dignified labourers. He is furthermore able to introduce a theme which he develops in the later passage concerning Boaz's winnowing, the rewards of following a calling, which is typical of his strategy of drawing attention to the incentives for a behaviour which he wishes to encourage.

<sup>418</sup> See Gen. 4.1-2.

<sup>419</sup> Alfonso the Wise, 1221-1284, King of Castile, was noted for his scientific interests. See Joseph F. O'Callaghan, *The Learned King*.

<sup>420</sup> The Grand Segnior or great Lord of the Turkish empire was the Ottoman emperor.

<sup>421</sup> From the late sixteenth century onwards the Ottoman Empire was becoming increasingly familiar in England as a trading and even military partner. The process of familiarisation is described by Gerald MacLean in his *Looking East: English Writing and the Ottoman Empire before 1800*.

maintenance, yet to prevent a world of wickednesse which commeth by their idle life. For who set out the ensignes of pride in apparell, but these? Who prove so prodigal? Who live so much in filthy lusts of uncleannesse? Who maintain play, and play-houses? Who are the Tabacconists,<sup>422</sup> the drunkards, the ryotous persons? Who of the roaring boyes,<sup>423</sup> and damned crue, but commonly these? Behold, you rich parents, the goodly fruit of the idle education of your children! But graunt they prove not ever such as be here named: may they yet live without callings, and onely live idly, and do nothing, because their parents can maintaine [p. 214<sup>424</sup>] them? Did rich *Abraham* so bring up *Isaac*, or he so *Jacob*; and this man so his children; or did *Jesse* thus traine up *David*? If he had, surely he had never beene King of Israel: for God never made choise of any man to advance him, but such as were in their callings. God calleth *Moses* keeping sheep;<sup>425</sup> so *David* <See what David was when he yet kept sheep. 1 Sam. 16.12, 18-19<sup>426</sup> and 17.40, 42>; and *Gideon* when he was threshing;<sup>427</sup> and *Elisha* when he was plowing;<sup>428</sup> *Amos* when he was with his cattel.<sup>429</sup> What shall I speake of the Apostles, when Christ did call them? Was not some mending their nets, other fishing, another sitting at the receipt of custome? none idle or out of a calling. So long as the prodigall sonne lived out of a calling, yea till he kept swine, as base as it was, he never came to himselfe, he never had grace to repent. These Idlers and loose livers yet say for themselves, that it is a disgrace for them to mind so meane things, as the men of old time did. Disgrace!

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<sup>422</sup> 'tobacconist': 'A person addicted to the use of tobacco; *esp.* a habitual tobacco-smoker.' (OEDO).

<sup>423</sup> 'Roaring boys' was 'an epithet used loosely to describe those given to noisy, showy and anti-social behaviour' in Elizabethan London (Cook 23-4).

<sup>424</sup> This page is mistakenly numbered p. 198 in the 1628 edition.

<sup>425</sup> See Exod. 3.1-4.

<sup>426</sup> Verse 11 is also relevant.

<sup>427</sup> See Judg. 6.11-12.

<sup>428</sup> See 1 Kings 19.19.

<sup>429</sup> See Amos 1.1.

Who can hold that to be a disgrace, which better men have done? Better for pietie to God, better before men, for noblenesse of birth, for greatnesse of state, and for name of renowne in the world. Againe, who doe make that a disgrace now, which God in his Word sheweth to have beene their praise? This conceit<sup>430</sup> of disgrace ariseth from the spirit of pride and vanitie, in the sonnes of *Belial*. But if conceit of disgrace make them avoid labour in some calling, whether of the mind or body; then would I faine know, why they avoid not those things wherein disgrace is indeed? and why they shame not to live idly, prodigally, lasciviously, [p. 215<sup>431</sup>] in ryot and excesse, in foolish pride, and vanitie, and lewd courses unbecoming the name of Christianity? Lastly, these unprofitable members will say, they have better beene brought up, than to take paines. What is this better bringing up? It is to follow fashions, or to drinke and whiffe the Tabacco pipe, or to congie<sup>432</sup> and complement, or to hunt and hawke, and then curse and sweare as the furies of Hell; or else to handle a weapon to strike and stab, and upon a word to challenge, and so into the field to play the Devils companion, or to play at dice and cards, or to read amorous bookes, to court a Curtisan,<sup>433</sup> I shoud say a Gentlewoman or a yong Gallant,<sup>434</sup> to vanitie and wantonnesse. How much more commendable were it, and profitable to be employed in some good literature, as in the knowledge of tongues, and arts? And will their bringing up allow them to live idly? Was not *Paul* brought up at the feet of *Gamaliel* a great Statesman among the Jewes, and yet he laboured with his hands, and never lived out of a particular calling? And was not *Moses* brought up in

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<sup>430</sup> 'conceit': 'That which is conceived in the mind, a conception, notion, idea, thought; device.' (OEDO).

<sup>431</sup> This page is mistakenly numbered p. 199 in the 1628 edition.

<sup>432</sup> 'congie': 'To make a congee; to bow in courtesy or obeisance.' (OEDO).

<sup>433</sup> 'curtisan': 'A court-mistress; a woman of the town, a prostitute.' (OEDO).

<sup>434</sup> 'gallant': 'Of a woman: A fashionably attired beauty.' (OEDO).

*Pharaoes* Court, and in all the learning of the Egyptians? Yet did he live in a calling, and would be a Shepheard, rather then live idly, or in *Pharaoes* Court wickedly: he pleaded not his birth, his gentrie,<sup>435</sup> his better education, as these doe. It is enough to be a Gentleman, as they speake now adayes, to countenance him in sinne, in sloth, in braverie,<sup>436</sup> in contempt of a strict life, to live out of a calling, saving the calling of a Gentleman, a profession so [p. 216] abused to advance sinne and Satans kingdome, as nothing more: yet never read I, nor heard I of in holy Writ, or elsewhere, that the title and name of a Gentleman should be a calling, to exempt men from all callings, from all honest labours, and to leave them loose, as wild Colts without bit or bridle, to their owne lusts and licentious libertie, and finally, to their ruine and destruction. This is not Gentry, but rather Gentilisme,<sup>437</sup> to be hated of a Christian. The practice whereof was odious even in the Common-wealths of Heathen men.

*And it was about an Epha of Barley.*] Thus much her daies labour came unto, which was almost a bushell after our measure. An Epha was tenne times as much as an Omer, which was the measure for gathering Mannah <Exod. 16.36; Exod. 16.16>; and this was as much as would serve one man bread for a day.<sup>438</sup> So *Ruth* had gathered so much in one day, as might serve her many dayes: thus the Lord blessed her labour. Whence we may learne this, that *the Lord can and will give sometime a plentifull blessing to the diligent hand*. Thus he blessed *Jacob* in his painefull

<sup>435</sup> 'gentry': 'Rank by birth (usually, high birth; *rarely* in neutral sense).' (OEDO).

<sup>436</sup> 'bravery': 'The action of braving or acting the bravo; daring, defiance; boasting, swaggering; bravado.' (OEDO).

<sup>437</sup> cf. p.113, 'Gentility, or rather indeed, to call it, as they make it, Gentilisme'. Bernard has no tolerance for those who make claims on the basis of social superiority.

<sup>438</sup> Bernard follows Topsell in defining an ephah according to the English measure as almost a bushel, whereas Lavater uses the Tygurine measure, according to which an ephah contains three bushels. He adopts Topsell's observation, supported by reference to Exod. 16.36, that an ephah contains ten omers, whereas Lavater, evidently in error, declares that ten ephahs make an omer (Topsell 140, Lavater 79r). Bernard thus shows his ability to make the most accurate and relevant use of his predecessors. He simplifies their explanations, merely giving the English measure and drawing attention to the biblical indication of the sufficiency of an omer for one person.

service so, as hee was able to give to *Esau* a present of five hundred fiftie head of beasts and cattell, of one sort and other <Gen. 32.13-14<sup>439</sup>>; for all things are in his hand, and at his disposing. How soone did hee enrich againe *Job*?<sup>440</sup> It is nothing with the Lord to make a poore man rich. And therefore in our labours let us have recourse unto God, because hee giveth power to get wealth <Deut. 8.18>; without his blessing our labour is in vaine <Ps. 127.2; Hag. 1.6>; but with his [p. 217] blessing our labour shall take good effect <John 21.6>.<sup>441</sup>

Verse 18. *And shee tooke it up, and went into the citie; and her mother in law saw what shee had gleaned; and she brought forth, and gave to her that shee had reserved, after she was sufficed.*

*Ruthes* comfortable returne out of the field, with what, whither, to whom, with her kindnesse in giving what shee had reserved at mealetime from *Boaz* table; so as she had a double witnesse to shew her mother his kindnesse; the Epha of barley, and the food of his table: both which did (no doubt) greatly comfort the heart of *Naomi*, as appeareth by her heartie prayers in the next verse.

*And she tooke it up, and went into the Citie.* Shee beareth the burthen her self. And this is noted, to shew how *the Lord taketh notice of the burthens of his children*; which are of two sorts, either such as bee voluntarily undertaken, and willingly for discharge of their dutie, as *Jacob* in his service to *Laban* <Gen. 31.12<sup>442</sup>>, or *Ruth*

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<sup>439</sup> Verse 15 is also relevant.

<sup>440</sup> See Job 42.10-17.

<sup>441</sup> Bernard characteristically illustrates Lavater's point, that labours are vain unless God blesses them (*Lavater* 79v), with several biblical references. Topsell merely notes that God provided for Ruth by Boaz's liberality (140).

<sup>442</sup> The correct reference probably is Gen. 29.18-20.

here for her honest maintenance, or else imposed upon them, as the burthens of *Pharaoh* upon the Israelites <Exod. 3.7>: on both the Lord looketh, approving the one, and pitying the other. Which may give comfort unto the painefull, in bearing the burthen of their calling, or of oppression; for the Lord knoweth their troubles, their labour and trauell, and will doe them good in the end, if they waite with patience.<sup>443</sup>

*And her mother in law saw what she had glea- [p. 218] ned.]* By this it appeareth, that *Ruth* did hide none of her gleaning from *Naomi*, but shewed her all, and this for three causes; to manifest Gods mercy towards her, that she might praise God with her; to shew that she had been painefull in her absence, and not spent her time idly; and to shew her faithfulness, that she kept nothing from her.<sup>444</sup> And thus should children and servants doe to such as depend upon their labour, approve<sup>445</sup> their labour by the fruits thereof, and their faithfulness unto their Parents and Masters. They may not bee faithlesse as some servants bee, nor carelesse and idle as be too many children, who under their Parents take libertie to be lazy, when yet they

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<sup>443</sup> Bernard follows Lavater's conclusion from the holy Ghost noting that Ruth carried her burden herself, that God has a care of these things (Lavater 78v). However, he takes this in a rather different direction. Lavater takes the opportunity to criticise Roman Catholicism by going on to claim that such common works, rather than undertaking pilgrimages or putting on the clothing of monks, are required by God (78v-79r). Bernard, however, provides biblical references to differentiate between voluntary and imposed burdens, and calls for patience given God's sympathy for both sorts. Regarding imposed burdens he may have had in mind the persecution of Puritan clergy.

<sup>444</sup> In making the interpretation that Ruth showed Naomi all of the barley she had gleaned, Bernard follows Lavater, who observes this and notes that Ruth did not eat the food from the meal secretly. Bernard elaborates on Lavater's explanation that Ruth did this to make Naomi merry (Lavater 80r-80v), which leads him to follow both Lavater and Topsell in the next part of this passage, in exhorting children to do as Ruth did to their parents although some neglect to act thus (Lavater 80v-81r; Topsell 141-2). Bernard adds servants' duty to their masters (see the Introduction section 3; see also Topsell's comment, deriving from Ruth's completion of her labour, on the duties of children and servants, even when their parents or masters are absent (Topsell 139-40)). In expounding Ruth's report to Naomi in Chapter 3 of Boaz giving her six measures of barley, Bernard again makes the point that Ruth brought home all that was given to her. In observing that she did not sell any to buy necessities for herself, he echoes Lavater's observation at this point in Chapter 2 that she did not eat some of her food secretly. Bernard on this occasion notes Ruth's honesty (Bernard 330).

<sup>445</sup> 'approve': 'To demonstrate practically or to the experience of others, display, exhibit, make proof of.' (OEDO).

have more reason to bee painefull and carefull then servants, as nature, better maintenance, and the hope of portions and inheritance binde them.

*And she brought forth, and gave her.*] After that *Ruth* had shewed what she had gleaned, she took out some victuals, and gave to her mother in law also. *Godly children are kind and loving to their Parents* <See chapter 4 verse 15<sup>446</sup>>. If this bee in a daughter in law, to a mother in law; much greater is the bond of duty of naturall children to their naturall Parents, if they be truly religious: as may bee seene in *David* to his Parents <1 Sam. 22.3>, and *Joseph* to his <Gen. 45.11>. And good reason is there why they should doe their Parents all good: nature bindes them, also the commandement of God to honour them <Exod. 20<sup>447</sup>>; which comprehendeth love, reverence, obedience, and reliefe; and the example of godly children, yea, of Christ [p. 219] himself unto his mother <John 19.26-7>, moveth them. There be also rare examples for this among the Heathen, the rather<sup>448</sup> to perswade Christians hereunto, lest they rise up in judgement against them <See *Valerius Maximus, liber 5, caput 4.*<sup>449</sup>>. Let children therefore learne to be kind and mercifull to their poore Parents, and not be like the unnaturall Impes,<sup>450</sup> whereof there bee these sorts, such as care not to provide for them, but to get all they can from them; they are not willing to do them good, but grudge to relieve them, and are sicke of their lives, wishing their death, to be eased of the burthen. Other there be which will rob their Parents, and steale from them what they can get, yea, and thinke it no sinne, as *Salomon* telleth us <Prov. 28.24>; yet are they the companions of a destroyer.<sup>451</sup> The third sort are

<sup>446</sup> Although Naomi was not a parent of Obed she had a parental role in being his nurse.

<sup>447</sup> Specifically, verse 12.

<sup>448</sup> 'the rather': 'the more readily (on this account or for this reason); (all) the more.' (OEDO).

<sup>449</sup> Chapter 4 of Book 5 of *Memorable Doings and Sayings*, pp. 492-507, contains anecdotes relating to loyalty to parents.

<sup>450</sup> 'imp': 'offspring, child (usually male).' (OEDO).

<sup>451</sup> Bernard returns to the issue of children robbing their parents in Chapter 3, in connection with Ruth's not keeping back from Naomi any of the six measures of barley which Boaz gave her (330).



those hellish monsters, who rise up to murder their Parents, but the Lord revengeth it, as we see in the example of *Absalom*.<sup>452</sup>

*That shee had reserved, after shee was sufficed.*] It is meet to eate to suffice nature, for the preservation of life, and the better inabling of us to walke painfully in our calling, of which before in verse 14.<sup>453</sup> Note farther hence,<sup>454</sup> I. That *such as have true love, will spare from themselves to relieve others*, yea though they themselves be but poore, and have nothing but from hand to mouth, as we say. Of this we have here an example, and in the poore widdow, which gave her two mites <Luke 21.2>; yea our Saviour, who was relieved by others, yet kept a bag for the poore; he spared of his gifts, to give unto others.<sup>455</sup> For true love cannot but pittie the want of others: and such as so love, will not [p. 220] hoard up for themselves, and let their poore brethren remaine in want, when for the present they have sufficient; they live in hope of supply, and doubt not of Gods providence for the time to come, when they give charitably what they may spare for the present.<sup>456</sup> This condemneth the cursed covetousnesse of such as have laid up in store for many yeeres, and yet will not bestow any thing upon such as doe need; and also it checketh such as excuse and exempt themselves wholly and alwayes for giving any thing, because they be poore. If this plea had sticke in the heart of the poore widdow, which cast her mites into the treasurie, shee would have reserved them to her selfe: but so should shee have lost

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<sup>452</sup> See 2 Sam. 18.9, 14-15.

<sup>453</sup> See pp. 200-1.

<sup>454</sup> In I and II Bernard follows Topsell's argument regarding Ruth 2.18 and also follows a number of other places in Topsell's commentary. In doing so, he brings together Topsell's points on relieving others and avoiding waste.

<sup>455</sup> See John 13.29. Bernard reinforces Topsell's mention of the poor widow (Topsell 144) by alluding also to the bag.

<sup>456</sup> Topsell declares, with reference to Boaz's generosity to Ruth in Ruth 2.16, that the godly ought not to distrust in the mercy of God to come. They must not be covetous. (Topsell 137-8) Bernard makes this the occasion to criticise those who have stores but will not relieve the needy. This criticism appears to derive from Topsell's condemnation of the covetous corn seller, whose garners are full but who claims that corn is scanty, in his exposition of Ruth 1.1. (11)

her eternall praises.<sup>457</sup> II. *Such as would thrive, spend not all at once, but reserve somewhat both for themselves and for others.*<sup>458</sup> *Ruth* ate, shee was sufficed, and reserved some for afterwards, for her mother and her selfe: she was not ryotous and wastfull, because she had more then did suffice for the present. For such as be painfull, know how they come by that which they have; they also know it to be a vertue to spare and keep, what necessitie causeth not to be layd out, neither charitie, nor pietie to be spent; they know, that what they have, is so their owne before men, as yet before God they are but Stewards thereof. Therefore from this, and *Ruths* example, we must learne frugality, to use Gods blessings to doe our selves good; but we must beware of waste, and not let any thing be lost, as our Saviour commanded, when he had fed so [p. 221] many thousands <John 6.12-13>. They then here are worthy of just reprehension, who wastfully consume Gods blessings; some on their bellie, as doe Drunkards and Gluttons; some on their fleshly delights, bringing themselves to a morsell of bread; others upon play and gaming, idle and prodigall unthrifts,<sup>459</sup> such as this our nation now is too much burthened with; others upon too costly and often fantasticke<sup>460</sup> attyre, the ensigne of pride and vanitie; to whom if any speake for their reformation, they reply with words of contempt of others, and carelesse neglect of their owne estate, saying, They spend but their own, what have

<sup>457</sup> Here, Bernard reduces the examples of poor but generous individuals who might have pleaded inability to give, which Topsell gives in expounding Ruth 2.16 – the widow of Zarephath, the church of the Macedonians, Onesiphorus and Obadiah (Topsell 138) – to the already mentioned poor widow.

<sup>458</sup> Bernard's wording of his doctrine differs slightly from that of Topsell, who writes 'let us reserve some for other'. (142) Bernard's wording, which refers to reserving for oneself as well as for others, reflects more accurately the content of the passage which follows, which here is similar to Topsell's exposition. It addresses the issue of not wasting one's resources. Bernard introduces the concept that individuals are only stewards of what they own towards the outset of the passage as well as where Topsell brings it in, in answer to those wasters who claim that they spend what is their own (Topsell 142-3). In doing so, he emphasises the responsibility of those who have possessions, notably the wealthy. Perhaps because he wants to maintain the focus on stewardship, Bernard omits the discourse on the benefits of avoiding excess with which Topsell concludes this discussion (143).

<sup>459</sup> 'unthrif': 'An unthrifty (†unthriving), shiftless, or dissolute person; a spendthrift, prodigal.' (OEDO).

<sup>460</sup> 'fantastic': 'foppish in attire' (OEDO).

any to doe with it? But these must remember, that they must give an account unto God, whose blessings they waste; they must also know, that Gods gifts are not given them to consume wholly upon themselves after their lusts, but to be Stewards thereof for God, and in his stead to doe good to others, as need shall require. This prodigality the Lord often punisheth with povertie <Luke 15<sup>461</sup>>, and sometime with imprisonment, yea with shamefull deaths in some, whom God giveth over to fall into the hand of the Magistrate for some evill committed and deserving death.

[p. 222] Verse 19. *And her mother in law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned to day? and where wroughtest thou? Blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee. And shee shewed her mother in law, with whom shee had wrought, and said, The mans name with whom I wrought to day, is Boaz.*

Here is *Naomi* her question to *Ruth*, with her heartie prayer to God for him that had so mercifully dealt with *Ruth*; and *Ruths* answer to her againe, shewing with whom shee had gleaned, and naming the name, even *Boaz* her kinsman.

*And her mother in law said, Where hast thou gleaned to day, and where wroughtest thou?]* When *Ruth* went out in the morning, shee asked leave of *Naomi* to goe to gleane, but whither shee knew not; therefore now being returned with so much corne, and such food, shee asketh *Ruth* where she had beene; not doubting of *Ruths* honest dealing, but in admiration of Gods mercy, and in desire to know who was the instrument of that hand of God upon her.<sup>462</sup> *For favours bestowed, doe win*

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<sup>461</sup> This seems to be a general reference to the parable of the prodigal son. See Bernard's use of this parable in chapter 1 (9).

<sup>462</sup> The question of Naomi's concern with who had allowed Ruth to acquire so much barley is treated by the Anonymous Rabbi, who, with reference to this verse, declares that Naomi concluded that Ruth could only have done this if she had been gleaned with one of their relatives (BJE 125).

*affections, and cause a longing after the partie to know who he is*, if we know not his person, as here; and also what his name is, and of what kindred, though we looke upon the man, as *Saul* did <1 Sam. 17.55-8>; that so we might see the reason thereof, and might shew particularly our love unto such a one, praise God, and pray also for him. Now, if this be the force of benefits from man, how much more [p. 223] from God, from whom we receive so many and daily blessings! These should win our affections to him, and worke in us a desire to know him, who he is, and why we should receive such kindnesse, that so we might love him, praise him, and in all thankfulness yeeld him all obedience. But, alas, upon whom doe his blessings thus worke ? I wish that his mercies made us not forget him, and to forsake him, when we have knowne him. In this that *Naomi* suspecteth not *Ruth*, but rather admireth Gods mercy towards her, wee may also note, that *the godly are not uncharitably suspicious of them that be poore, when they know them to bee godly*. *Naomi* did not thinke of any unjust dealing of *Ruth*, as if shee had stolne this corne, nor that shee had gone a begging to get it, or this other food; for shee asketh where shee had gleaned and wrought? not where shee had stolne and begged? For love is not suspicious, *it thinketh no ill* <1 Cor. 13.5>. *Naomi* was perswaded that some had bestowed this favour upon *Ruth* gleaning and working in the field.<sup>463</sup> This grace of charitie must wee labour for, even in thinking not amisse of others in getting goods, though much in a small time, so there be not apparent tokens of the ill meanes used in getting the same: for God can suddainly enrich a man; as he did *Abraham*, and *Lot*; so *Jacob* in the service of *Laban*: For *the blessing of the Lord maketh rich* <Prov. 10.22>. Yet if the man be wicked, and hastily is made rich, except an

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<sup>463</sup> Bernard is emphatic that *Naomi* did not think that *Ruth* had obtained the barley by wrongful means. He is evidently concerned to reject the possibility *Lavater* hints at, that *Naomi* may have been anxious to ascertain whether *Ruth* had committed theft (*Lavater* 81v).

apparent cause be seene, and the meanes also, he may be suspected: for of such *Salomon* speaketh in the [p. 224] Proverbs, that they shall not be innocent, and goods so gotten, shall not bee blessed in the end <Prov. 28.20 and 20.21>. Some from hence teach, because *Naomi* asketh *Ruth*, where she had gleaned, and wrought that day? that *Parents are to take an account of their children, how they spend their time, where they have beene, and with whom?*<sup>464</sup> Indeed this will make children to take more heed to their wayes, it will discover to parents their nature and conditions<sup>465</sup> the better, and it may prevent many evils through feare to be called to an account for the same. As on the contrary, this neglect in parents gives children the reine, and so they take libertie to sinne, presuming of parents indulgencie,<sup>466</sup> as did *Adoniah*, to whom *David* never said, Why hast thou done so? Which made him proud and presumptuous to his owne destruction <1 Kings 1.6<sup>467</sup>>.

*Blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee;*] to wit, to shew thee this mercy and kindnesse; for hee taketh knowledge of another, who considereth so of him, as his estate and condition requireth, and thereafter doth him good,<sup>468</sup> as *Boaz* did to

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<sup>464</sup> The italicised words seem to be derived from both Lavater and Topsell in their expositions of this verse. Lavater writes that parents are to take an account of their children, where they have been and with whom, and he goes on to specify further things which they should ascertain and do. Masters and others responsible for the young should do likewise, and account should also be taken of older people (81v-82r). Topsell notes the duty of parents and masters to call children and servants to a reckoning of where and how they bestow their time (144). Bernard endorses this consensus and adds to his predecessors' discussions the benefits of this procedure and a biblical example of the outcome of its neglect. He does not follow Topsell in complaining of omission to call children and servants to account for misspending the Sabbath, but rather adheres to the general lesson.

<sup>465</sup> 'condition': 'pl. Personal qualities; manners, morals, ways; behaviour, temper.' (OEDQ).

<sup>466</sup> 'indulgency': 'The quality or practice of being indulgent; indulgent disposition or action; = indulgence' (OEDQ).

<sup>467</sup> The first two chapters of 1 Kings tell the story of Adonijah's attempts to become king, terminating in his death (2.25).

<sup>468</sup> Lavater makes a linguistic analysis of the word 'know', noting the old translation (the Vulgate) rendering here as pitied, and claiming that Prov. 12.10 refers to a just man knowing the life of his beast with the same meaning of 'know' as Naomi uses here; that is, care and have a regard for, or have mercy on. Naomi, then, meant, having done Ruth a good turn (Lavater 82r-82v). Topsell, without referring to any authority, defines 'knew' as approved and showed favour to (145). Bernard echoes Lavater in defining 'knowledge' in terms of mercy but, like Topsell, does not attempt a linguistic analysis. The two later commentators evidently avoided trying to claim an identity of meaning with other instances of the diversely understood word 'know'. Here, Bernard follows Topsell's precedent

*Ruth*, when he knew what shee was, as is before noted out of verses 8 and 9.<sup>469</sup> For which here *Naomi* is thankfull, before shee knew the name of the man, and here heartily prayeth for him. Hence teaching, that *benefits received, provoke the godly to be thankfull, though they know not the parties, and also to pray for them*; as *Naomi* doth here. Which serves to encourage men to doe good to the godly, though their persons be not knowne: they shall not lose with them the fruit of their [p. 225] well-doing; for such will be thankfull, and will pray for them, that God may blesse them. And this teacheth such as receive favours, to shew themselves thankfull to them which bestow them. Now thankfulness appeareth, First, in acknowledging of benefits received: the contrary is ingratitude, and a note of pride withall. Secondly, in praying for them, as *Naomi* doth here; and Saint *Paul*, for his friends <2 Tim. 1.16<sup>470</sup>>. Thirdly, in requiting the kindnesses, as we shall be able, and occasion offered, as *David* to *Barzillai* <1 Kings 2.7<sup>471</sup>>; the Spies to *Rahab* <Josh. 6.23>; *Elisha* to the Shunamite <2 Kings 4.13>; and the great Emperour *Assuerus* to poore *Mordecai* <Esth. 6.3<sup>472</sup>>. Which is a reproofe to the ingratefull, such as will not acknowledge a benefit, or lessen it when they confesse it; they that never care to requite it, though it be in their power so to doe it, yea and need on the other side require it. Lastly, such as doe requite evill for good.<sup>473</sup> Here we may farther note, that *a good heart rejoyceth in the well-fare of another*. For *Naomi* blesseth God for *Boaz* taking knowledge of *Ruth*, and for doing this kindnes unto her; so doe the

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despite his own insistence in Faithfull Shepheard that some measure of knowledge of languages is required in a minister (35-6).

<sup>469</sup> See pp. 159-168, especially pp. 159, 160, 162, 163-8.

<sup>470</sup> Verses 17 and 18 are also relevant.

<sup>471</sup> In this biblical verse David is requiting the kindness not of Barzillai but of his sons.

<sup>472</sup> Verses 6-11 are also relevant.

<sup>473</sup> Here, Bernard restates much of his discussion on thankfulness and ingratitude on pp. 170-1. His emphasis on this subject (to which he returns on pp. 234-5) indicates his disapproval of the ungrateful poor and his insistence that there are also thankful and deserving poor whom the rich have an obligation to relieve.

Macedonians for the Corinthians kindnesse unto the Saints at Jerusalem.<sup>474</sup> For such have loving hearts, and are void of envie, therefore can they rejoyce and blesse God, yea and pray for a blessing upon those which doe good unto others: which grace we must strive for.

*And she shewed her mother in law, with whom she had wrought, and said, The mans name with whom I wrought to day, is Boaz. As Naomi did demand of her where and with whom shee had beene, so [p. 226] Ruth answereth plainely, telling her that the mans name, in whose field she gleaned that day, was Boaz: by which Naomi perceived the good hand of Gods providence conducting her into the kinsmans field, whose favour made her afterwards to counsell Ruth to goe into the threshing floore to Boaz, as it followeth in the next chapter.<sup>475</sup> Ruth calleth *gleaning*, working, as Naomi did before: for *the diligent hand worketh even in that, which otherwise may seeme to require no great labour*. Shee saith, shee wrought with him, not that he laboured with her, neither that shee did worke for him, as the Phrase in our speech doth intimate, but her meaning is, that shee wrought in his field with his leave and good liking.<sup>476</sup> In telling his name to her mother in law, it seemeth she learned it in the field; no doubt, she did aske after it, that so shee might speake of his goodnesse unto her mother in law, when she came home. And we must know, that *it is our duty to take speciall notice of such as doe us good, to know them by name,**

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<sup>474</sup> See Rom. 15.26.

<sup>475</sup> Bernard introduces the events of Chapter 3 by declaring Naomi's reason for sending Ruth to the threshing floor to have been Boaz's kindness. Making this point here opens the way for him to make a moral judgement informed by it his exposition of Chapter 3 (266-9).

<sup>476</sup> Topsell, as has been pointed out in a note on p. 193, interprets Ruth as meaning in verse 13, when she said that she was not like one of Boaz's handmaidens, that she was unworthy of Boaz's courtesy because she came to labour for herself and not for him as his maidens did (126). Here, Bernard disregards the possibility, suggested by Topsell, that Boaz was mistaken and thought that Ruth was working for him, and that Ruth meant to correct him, showing Christian simplicity (Topsell 128-9). Rather, Bernard represents Ruth as understanding herself to have worked in Boaz's field with his permission and approbation. In doing so, he implicitly criticises Topsell's interpretation.

that so they may be acknowledged, as occasion shall be to meet with them, that they<sup>477</sup> may in particular pray for them, and to give them their due praises to others. For either to neglect to know them, or easily to forget our Benefactors, is a fault.

[p. 227] Verse 20. *And Naomi said unto her daughter in law, Blessed be he of the Lord, who hath not left off his kindnesse to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man is neere of kinne unto us, one of our next kinsmen.*

This is *Naomi* her speech againe unto *Ruth*: wherein shee first earnestly prayeth for *Boaz*, with the reason why shee was so moved thereto, and then sheweth her what he was to them, even a very neere kinsman.

*And Naomi said unto her daughter in law, et cetera.*] When shee heard who it was, and calling to remembrance what hee was to them, and what mercy he had formerly shewed unto her husband and children, shee breaketh forth into prayer for him. Whence we may learne, that *new kindnesses added to the old, doe the more inflame the affections to love and hearty well-wishing*, as may appeare heere by *Naomi*: For new favours call the old to remembrance, and testifieth the continuance of love. This is an encouragement to such as have beene kind, still to continue so to the thankfull; the latter favors shall keep up the affection of love, and be the remembrancer<sup>478</sup> of what is past, and to bind the parties the more unto them. Now, if this be so with men, how should we be inflamed in love towards our good God and Father, who daily reneweth his blessings upon us? Ought we not to increase in love according to his mercies? But oh ungratefull man: What stupiditie [p. 228]

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<sup>477</sup> 'we' is meant.

<sup>478</sup> 'remembrancer': 'A reminder of something.' (OEDO).



possesseth thine heart! Doe we not receive his blessings with one hand, and shew our unmindfulnesse of him by the other? If the keeping of his commandement be the marke of our love <1 John 5.2>, as it is, then surely our waxing wanton<sup>479</sup> against him, by abusing of his blessings, openly proclaime rather hatred than love unto him. This is our unthankfulnesse, of which we must repent.

*Blessed be hee of the Lord.*] This is her prayer made to the Lord to blesse him. From this note many things. I. That *Prayer in and by every true member of the Church, hath beene onely made unto God*. This the examples of all the godly doe confirme, and thus are we commanded to doe, and therefore the prayers made to Sants, Angels, yea, or to the Virgin *Mary*, are abominable, and cursed idolatry. II. That *it is the Lord that doth blesse and make happy*: for what is begged of God, that is acknowledged to be his gift. And what happinesse corporall or spirituall can man attaine unto, but by the Lord? Therefore if we want blessings, let us beg them of him, if wee have them, acknowledge him the Authour, and be thankfull in cheerefull obedience for the same, as wee be exhorted in the Word of God <Deut. 10.12; Rom. 12.1>: For who can think himselfe blessed of God, and not be thankfull and obedient unto him, but such as be void of all grace? III. That *the Lord will blesse the mercifull*. For shee prayeth for that which she had warrant to aske: and wee find that the Lord hath so promised to doe <Ps. 41.1, 3;<sup>480</sup> Matt. 5.7>. And therefore let the mercifull looke for a blessing, and let us pray for that bles- [p. 229] sing upon their heads, which shew mercy unto the poore and needy, that they may be encouraged in such workes of charitie. And to move them hereto, let them consider Gods promise to them, how they be under Gods protection, how others pray for them, when they

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<sup>479</sup> ‘wanton’: ‘Undisciplined, ungoverned; not amenable to control, unmanageable, rebellious.’ (OEDO).

<sup>480</sup> Verse 2 is also relevant.

doe little thinke thereof, and doe blesse them <Deut. 24.13>, as *Naomi* doth *Boaz* here; and if the poore faile of their duety, yet the almesdeed ascendeth up to God <Acts 10.4>, and the worke done shall blesse them, even the backe and belly of the poore <Job 31.20>. Let these things move the rich to doe workes of mercy, and to rejoyce therein. IV. That *the poores reward unto the rich for their workes of charity, is onely their prayer to God for them*. *Naomi* had no other recompence for *Boaz*, but this; and this is a great requitall,<sup>481</sup> when it is a fervent prayer from faith; for such the Lord doth heare, and will himselfe reward their workes, he becomes bound for them, to make good what on their behalfe is wanting. Which may greatly comfort such as be mercifull. And seeing the poore have nothing else to repay backe, but their prayers; let them not faile in this, not onely when and while the benefit is in receiving, but even when for time the favour may seeme to bee forgotten, so often as their Benefactors come to their remembrance, not to faile to lift up a thought to God for them.<sup>482</sup>

*Who hath not left off his kindnesse to the living and to the dead.*] The reason which moved *Naomi* to pray so fervently for a blessing upon *Boaz*, was his constant favour towards them alive, as before to [p. 230] her husband and children then dead: and it is as if *Naomi* had said, He continueth still in his former kindnesse to us that be now alive, to thee and me, which he shewed to my husband and children now

<sup>481</sup> 'requital': 'Return for some service, kindness, etc.' (OEDO).

<sup>482</sup> In III and IV Bernard draws on the expositions by Lavater and Topsell of *Naomi*'s praying. He omits Lavater's claim that *Naomi*'s prayer was only part of her thanks to *Boaz* and *Ruth*, which she also showed in her deed of providing a husband for *Ruth* (Lavater 85r-85v). This may reflect the disapproval he expresses for *Naomi*'s manoeuvring in Chapter 3. However, Bernard follows Lavater in the latter's drawing on Job 31 to show that even if the recipient fails to pray for the benefactor, the good work itself cries to God (Lavater 86r). In III he adopts Lavater's point that this should encourage giving to the poor (Lavater 86v). This emphasis that the rich should feel encouraged to be generous is balanced by his calling in IV on the poor to pray for the rich who have given them charity. In pointing out that this is the only reward they can give them he follows Topsell (145). Bernard thus draws on both his early modern predecessors in such a way as to support his exhortations to the rich to be generous and to the poor to be grateful.

departed this life. The Papists prattle, I know not what, of benefiting the dead by workes of charity, out of this place, by wresting the sense thereof to maintaine their errour <Feuardentius *in hunc locum*.<sup>483</sup>>:<sup>484</sup> which I leave as idle and unprofitable, and come to more sound and profitable instructions for our selves. Hence may we observe, That *true love in good men, dyes not with the dead*, but is shewed to those they leave behind them, as *Boaz* doth here to *Ruth* and *Naomi* for their husbands sake; so did *David* to *Mephibosheth* for *Jonathans* sake <2 Sam. 9.1<sup>485</sup>>: for a true friend loveth at all times <Prov. 17.17>.<sup>486</sup> *David* received kindnesse of the King of Moab <1 Sam. 22.4>, and being dead, hee sent to comfort his sonne *Hanun* <2 Sam. 10.2<sup>487</sup>>, if it had beene so taken. For a true friend seeth his friend alive in his children, and posterity. Let us then, if we love one truely, not bury our love with him in his grave, as the manner of the world is now, which is full of counterfeit love. But let us imitate our heavenly Father, who loved *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, and their seed after them,<sup>488</sup> and promiseth mercy unto thousands of the posterity of such as love him, and keepe his commandements <Exod. 20<sup>489</sup>>. This reproveth such which let their love die with their friends; also such as love their friends posterity, if they be rich, but not if they be poore, as *Boaz* doth here: But true friendship maketh no difference of a friend by [p. 231] riches and poverty: for if this make the difference,

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<sup>483</sup> 'Feuardentius *respecting this place*.' Francois Feuardent (1539-1610) was a French Franciscan theologian, who wrote a number of Bible commentaries, including one on *Ruth*, evidently consulted by Bernard. See 'Feuardent, Francois'.

<sup>484</sup> Bernard follows Lavater and Topsell in critically ascribing to Roman Catholics practices regarding the dead in expounding Naomi's words here (*Lavater* 84r [as on 26r-26v], *Topsell* 146). This was a major issue dividing Roman Catholics and Protestants.

<sup>485</sup> The entire chapter is relevant.

<sup>486</sup> Bernard seizes on the example of Mephibosheth, used by Lavater and Topsell, to illustrate friendship benefiting a deceased friend's connections (*Lavater* 84r-84v, *Topsell* 146).

<sup>487</sup> Bernard identifies the king of Moab with the king of Ammon, two different kingdoms, for the sake of his moral observation. In fact, there is no record of the kindness David received from the king of Ammon.

<sup>488</sup> In drawing attention to these instances of God's favour, Bernard follows Topsell (146).

<sup>489</sup> Specifically, verse 6.

the friendship is certainly counterfeit. Thirdly, this condemneth such friends as love such as remaine of their friends departed so, as under colour of kindnesse, they rob their children committed by the will of their dead friend to their custodie; such villanie there is in the world, and falsehood masked under the shadow of love.<sup>490</sup> Besides instruction, here is also matter of consolation,<sup>491</sup> if we consider how God raiseth up constant friends to poore posterities; though this be rare, yet wee have in this place an example, that God is the same in power and mercy to doe the like still for his children: but be it that men faile to be faithfull in their love, let us be comforted in this, that the Lord is faithfull: if he love *Abraham* his friend, his posterity in Egypt after foure hundred yeeres shall reape benefit thereby; if the Lord chose a *David*, he will for a long time for his sake shew kindnesse to his posterity. Let this, this I say, settle the hearts of carefull parents for their posterity: for if the Lord love them, hee will not faile them; nor forsake their posterity that shall depend upon him, hee is the sure and constant friend, and will not leave off his kindnesse to the living and to the dead, as *Naomi* speaketh heere of *Boaz*.

*And Naomi said unto her, The man is neere of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen.*] It may seeme by this, that before now *Naomi* had not told *Ruth* of *Boaz* her rich kinseman, but at this present, as occasion had now offered it selfe, now she telleth [p. 232] her that hee was a very neere kinsman, one of her Redeemers, which had a right to redeeme the inheritance,<sup>492</sup> and so to marry her, and to raise up seed unto the dead, as the Law required <Deut. 25<sup>493</sup>>; and this *Naomi* telles her of, to

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<sup>490</sup> Bernard brings together criticisms of individuals who are deficient in their treatment of deceased friends' surviving connections. This is by contrast with the criticisms of Lavater, who draws attention to those who do little or only in the short term (84r), and, later, to those who do wrong to them (85r).

<sup>491</sup> Bernard refers to instructive and consolatory uses of doctrine, as set out in The Faithfull Shepheard (63-7, 69-70).

<sup>492</sup> See Lev. 25.25.

<sup>493</sup> Specifically, verses 5-10.

shew how naturall affection did in some sort bind him to this kindnesse which he had shewed her, and also to comfort *Ruth* in this poore estate, in hope of a better condition, as it afterwards fell out. Observe hence, I. That *the godly wise poore are not vainglorious boasters of their rich friends and kindred*. *Naomi* made not him knowne before this to *Ruth*, both for that shee would not intice *Ruth* to come and embrace her company for any outward respect of worldly friendship, and also because shee knew it to be folly to boast of rich friends, except they were sure to find them good and kind. *Naomi* was not as some poore be, which foolishly brag of rich kinsfolke, while yet they find them not true friends, such as will hardly acknowledge them to be of their kindred, either doe them almost any good at all. II. That *it is then a comfort to the poore to speake of rich kindred, when they shew themselves kind*, as kindred ought to doe; for kindred may so be called from kindnesse in them, and by shewing themselves kind to their kinsfolke, as *Boaz* doth here; and therefore *Naomi* now, but not before, telleth *Ruth* of him, what he was to them. The poore may hence learne when fitly to speake of such kinsfolke: and the rich may see how to open the mouthes of their poore friends to speake of them, and to pray for [p. 233] them, even by shewing the true tokens of love and kindred. III. That *neere kinsfolke are to be kind to their poore kindred*: for *Naomi* giveth this as some reason of *Boaz* his so great favour towards them: and this naturall bond of love hath both reason and Religion to strengthen the same: and therefore such as bee so bound and will not be kind, doe against nature, reason, and Religion: as when parents neglect children; these, their parents; so brethren and sisters one another: and yet this unnaturall affection is common in these our dayes, which the Apostle condemneth <Rom. 1.31>, and also foretelleth it to be a sinne in the last dayes <1 Tim. 3.3<sup>494</sup>>. Lastly,

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<sup>494</sup> The correct reference is 2 Tim. 3.3.

in calling *Boaz* one of the Redeemers, as the word translated *kinsmen* sheweth, it may put us in mind of this, that *the Lord hath great care over the poore*, who appointed by his Law the redemption of lands to the family againe, from which it was sold <Lev. 25.25; Deut. 25.5-6<sup>495</sup>>. And this care hath ever the Lord had, as may appeare by commanding to relieve them, by promising to reward the good done unto them, by blessing such as have beene mercifull, and leaving their praises in the Scripture, by publishing their reward at the last day, and by ordaining a Law for the redemption of their estate among the Israelites.<sup>496</sup> The consideration whereof may move the poore to be thankfull, and rest in God; and the rich to bee good unto the poore, and herein to imitate the Lord, who so careth for them, as we see.

[p. 234] Verse 21. *And Ruth the Moabitesse said, He said unto me also, Thou shalt keepe fast by my yong men, untill they have ended all my harvest.*

Ruth here relateth *Boaz* further kindnesse, both what, and how long, to glean in his field after his Reapers, as in the eighth verse,<sup>497</sup> and that unto the end of harvest.

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<sup>495</sup> In adding the reference to levirate marriage in Deuteronomy 25 after providing the clearly relevant reference to Leviticus 25, Bernard indicates the association between redemption and levirate marriage which he notes towards the beginning of this passage (232), and to which he draws attention in chapter 4 (see, eg., p. 371).

<sup>496</sup> Bernard follows Topsell in concluding that redemption shows God's care over the poor, but his further evidences of this care emphasise the duty of the rich to the poor rather than God's power to invert the social order as stated by Topsell (Topsell 147-8). In this, Bernard shows his commitment to the social hierarchy.

<sup>497</sup> Attention is drawn in the Introduction section 6.2 to the salient points of the readings by the early modern commentators on Ruth of Ruth's reference in this verse to Boaz telling her to keep close to his young men. In Ruth 2.8 he had told her to stay close to his maidens. Here, Bernard's mention of the eighth verse may indicate that he is uneasy with the discrepancy, for the instruction to Ruth to glean after the reapers occurs in Ruth 2.9, not in Ruth 2.8. Bernard does note in his exposition of Ruth 2.8 that Boaz willed Ruth to follow his reapers (162). However, this point is only a minor one in his discussion. It is likely that by alluding to Ruth 2.8, he means to highlight the different wording of this verse from verse 21. Moreover, if Bernard intends to guide his readers to the content of his exposition of Ruth 2.8, he probably wishes them to note his more emphatic view there that women are to keep

*And Ruth the Moabitesse said, He said unto me also, Thou shalt keepe fast by my yong men.]* When *Ruth* perceived the joy of *Naomi* for this kindnesse of *Boaz*, she goeth on to relate further testimonie of his love, and it is as if shee had said, *Boaz* did not onely thus with me, as thou my mother hast heard and seene, but which is more, He willed me to continue with his servants till harvest be ended. Where we see, that *where praises of others are well taken, it maketh the Relater to expresse more fully their goodnesse*. And therefore to encourage men to give others their due praises, let us receive willingly the relation of their vertues and graces. For such is our corruption, that we can attend to ill reports, which makes many so ready to speake ill of others. I wish our eares open in the other respect, but in this I would we were more dull of hearing. Three reasons may be given of the relation of this kindnesse to *Naomi*. One may be this, to set out *Boaz* praises, and to shew his kindnesse to the full, even as she found it. If so, then we learne, that *thankefull persons conceale nothing of others kindnesses either in word or deed* [p. 235] *that may tend to their just commendations*: and thus thankfull should wee be. This thankfulness is an excellent vertue commended in Scripture, and practised of the

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with women (162-3). If this is the case, he is implicitly criticising what Ruth said that Boaz had told her. Such disapproval is indicated by his comment on verse 22 that Naomi will not even mention lewd and lustful men although Ruth spoke of young men in verse 21, for women should not talk unnecessarily of men (239). Unease regarding Ruth's report in Ruth 2.21 is apparent in Bernard's medieval Jewish as well as his early modern predecessors. Salmon ben Yeroham evades the difficulty by representing Ruth as saying that she was to continue to go into Boaz's fields with his young women (BJE 69). Abraham ibn Ezra, on the other hand, makes an explanation of Ruth's words in his exposition of verse 22. He notes that Naomi speaks of Ruth gleaning with Boaz's young women not his young men, and goes on to suggest that Boaz may have (evidently in an unrecorded piece of advice) meant that Ruth was to entrust herself to one of the young men, the overseer (BJE 140). Josephus and the medieval Christian commentators make less of an issue of Ruth's words. Josephus does not specify Ruth's words to Naomi. Jerome represents Ruth as saying that Boaz ordered her to join his reapers until all the fields were reaped, and Naomi as saying that it was better for Ruth to reap with Boaz's girls (MET 2). Peter Comestor omits to specify what Ruth said to Naomi, and Hugh of St. Cher and Nicholas of Lyra do not mention the discrepancy. Lavater and Topsell do not criticise Ruth either. Topsell, for instance, evades making any attempt to explain the discrepancy. However, the difficulties found by his predecessors in expounding this exchange between Ruth and Naomi mean that Bernard feels he has to comment, albeit with a discreet indirectness.

godly, as before is noted:<sup>498</sup> and on the contrary, ingratitude is odious, and causeth uncharitableness in giving, because the poore take not thankfully their almes; in lending also, and that either not at all, for that men be so dishonest, that they will not repay what they owe, or deferre to pay in due time, or not freely, but for gaine, because men would benefit themselves by other mens money, but will not willingly requite it without compact aforehand. And thus we see the evill of ingratitude. The other reason may be, to know her mothers pleasure therein, and how shee liked of it to goe still into *Boaz* fields. If this, then we may learne, that *children are to take advice of their parents in their courses*, so servants of their masters: for, this is to give them honour; also an acknowledging themselves to be at their disposing, and not their owne men, and it will free them from blame, when things, perhaps, fall out crossely. It is a fault for such to runne on an head, as best pleaseth themselves: this is disorder, and unrulinesse not sufferable: this is headinesse<sup>499</sup> condemned by the Apostle <2 Tim. 3.4>, and much evill hath come hereby; see it in *Esau* his marriages <Gen. 26.35<sup>500</sup>>; in *Dinah* her wandering <Gen. 34.1<sup>501</sup>>; in *Simeon* and *Levi* their cruelty;<sup>502</sup> in *Abimelechs* contentious servants, and *Lots* servants; those might have bred heart-burning<sup>503</sup> betweene *Abimelech* and *Abraham* <Gen. 21.25-6>, as these divided *Abraham* and *Lot* asunder.<sup>504</sup> heady [p. 236] and unruly children and servants may do a great deale of mischief; they are therefore to be advised, and to follow advice. The third reason may be, to shew her mother in law, where shee might with good profit continue to gleane, and also of her willingnesse therefore to

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<sup>498</sup> See pp. 170, 224-5.

<sup>499</sup> 'headiness': 'Rashness, hastiness, precipitancy; unruliness, self-will, obstinacy, headstrongness.' (OEDO).

<sup>500</sup> Verse 34 is also relevant.

<sup>501</sup> Verse 2 is also relevant.

<sup>502</sup> The cruelty of Simeon and Levi is condemned by their father Jacob in Gen. 34.30.

<sup>503</sup> 'heart-burn': 'To regard or treat with jealous enmity.' (OEDO).

<sup>504</sup> See Gen. 13.7-11.



continue in that labour. If so, then we see that *the fruit of our labour, gaine and commodity, doth spurre on the diligent to continue therein*. Therefore pray for a blessing to be encouraged in paines-taking; and feeling the fruit, continue therein.

*Untill they have ended all my harvest.*] They had a barley and wheat harvest, both here meant, as is plaine in verse the 23. These words *untill they have made an end,*] shew some length of his harvest, and his conceit of *Ruths* painfulnesse, that shee would continue to the end, and not give off after a day or two: they note also his love and mercy to the poore widdowes. And lastly, they set forth his equitie and true liberality, that graunted her freedome in his owne, and not in other mens fields. What further may be observed from hence, see before in the eighth verse, where the matter is handled;<sup>505</sup> here onely is the relation of her liberty unto her mother in law. In all which speech it is worthy the noting, that shee speaketh not a word of *Boaz* great commendations of her owne selfe, verse the 11. Which commendeth to us in her, *modestie, that is, to passe over our owne praises*: which is an example for our imitation, that we might not be condemned of vainglory, and to bee such as be in love with them- [p. 237] selves, as those be, which love to tell of their owne vertues.<sup>506</sup>

Verse 22. *And Naomi said unto Ruth her daughter in law, It is good, my daughter, that thou goe out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in another field.*

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<sup>505</sup> See pp. 159-63, especially p. 162.

<sup>506</sup> Bernard follows Topsell in drawing attention to Ruth's modesty in concealing her own commendation in verse 11 (Topsell adding verse 12, see [Topsell](#) 148). However, whereas Topsell conflates his discussion of modesty with his discussion of ingratitude, Bernard focuses here on exhorting his readers to imitate Ruth's modesty.

*Naomi* her good counsell, with the reason drawne from perill and danger, if *Ruth* should not follow it.

*And Naomi said unto Ruth her daughter in law.*] Here note once for all, that *plainely the Writer of this Historie setteth downe this conference*, repeating againe and againe *Naomi*, and mother in law, and *Ruth* the Moabitesse, and daughter in law, which I note to taxe curious<sup>507</sup> eares in these times, who can away<sup>508</sup> neither with speech nor writing, except all be very sententious, briefe, without repetitions, or one word more then they conceit to be needfull. Gods Spirit the authour of every good gift, be it never so excellent, taught not this Pen-man to be so curious, not that he would have holy things carelesly and rudely set downe, as men censure it, but to humble proud wits, given over to a light esteeme of holy Writ, not caring to reade therein for the plainnesse of style <*Albeit what humane eloquence could ever attain to the sublimitie of stile used in the Propheticall Bookes of sacred Scripture, as in Esay, Jeremie, and others?*>, that so through their owne pride they might perish, as, alas, many of our high wits doe, who cannot in the hautines of their owne hearts descend to so low a pitch; nor vouchsafe to spend any time in such homely Histories as be in the [p. 238] Scripture, because, as they prophanely judge, the stile is not stately enough for their carnall hearts. And as this taxeth these proud and prophane persons, so also doth it such as doe despise or carelesly neglect many good mens labours, onely for the plainnesse of the speech, as if all writings were weake, which are voyd of strong lines. These daintie palates can away with nothing but what is finely cookt, because they come not with hunger after good things, but are carried away more with the manner than with the matter, and so more with shadowes, than

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<sup>507</sup> 'curious': 'Careful as to the standard of excellence; difficult to satisfy; particular; nice, fastidious.' (OEDO).

<sup>508</sup> 'away': 'Get on or along *with*, put up with; tolerate, endure, bear.' (OEDO).

substances, as in likelihood it would appeare, if they should come to the triall of Religion, and suffering for the name of Christ.<sup>509</sup>

*It is good, my daughter, that thou goe out with his maidens.*] This is *Naomi* her advice to *Ruth*. From whence note, I. That *Parents are not to be wanting in giving good counsell to their children*; as here a mother in law to *Ruth*; and *Jethro* a father in law to *Moses* <Exod. 18<sup>510</sup>>; *David* to *Salomon* <1 Kings 2<sup>511</sup>>; and *Eli* to his sonnes <1 Sam. 2.23-5>: It is their duety so to doe, and the yonger yeeres need it, wanting the experience of the aged. Let parents performe then this duety, shewing their children what is good, what dueties they owe to God and man, and how they should demeane themselves well every way <Eph. 6.4; Deut. 6.7>. Contrary to these doe they, which take no care to advise their children, but doe let them follow their owne swinge. Such also as counsell for the body, as the Heathen may doe; but not for the soule, as Christians should doe. Thirdly, those wicked [p. 239] parents which counsell their children not to doe well, but to doe ill, to lie, sweare, steale, as many poore doe; or to dice, card, drinke, or to doe worse, as men desiring to be counted of another ranke, wickedly teach their children by their lewd examples, to their shame, and their childrens ruine, the infecting of the Common-wealth, and the destruction of their house many times. Whereas such parents as doe advise well their children, do discharge their duety towards God, and their countrey, and acquite their soules from the bloud of their children <Tit. 2.3-4>.<sup>512</sup> II. That *it is good for women going*

<sup>509</sup> In this attack Bernard may be motivated by his reaction to criticism of his own writing. *Ruths Recompence*, for instance, exemplifies his disciplined writing of sermons in accordance with *The Faithfull Shepheard* (see the Introduction section 4.2.2).

<sup>510</sup> Specifically, verses 13-26.

<sup>511</sup> Specifically, verses 1-9.

<sup>512</sup> This passage about good and bad parental advice develops Topsell's noting of the benefits of the practice of seeking guidance from parents and friends (Topsell 149) and declaration that if children want counsel parents should provide it, as with other services (Topsell 149-50). Whereas Topsell's immediate concern is with the prevention of unsuitable marriages (150), Bernard is anxious to condemn bad parental advice, something to which Topsell does also draw attention (Topsell 151-2).

*abroad, to associate themselves to those of their owne sexe:* For they are subject to be tempted, to be deceived, and abused, being weake in temptation, and easily overcome. Let women learne here of *Naomi* her advice to *Ruth*, and follow it; let them beware of being alone as *Dinah*, or in suspected places with lewd women, or in light and wanton company. It is no good signe of a maidens chastitie, to seek to be in mens company, as many doe, till shame come upon them.<sup>513</sup>

*That they meet thee not in another field:]* meaning some lewd and lustfull men, whom *Naomi* will not so much as make mention of: though *Ruth* named in verse 21 yong men, yet her mother in law will not name them; shee avoids the mentioning of men to her, as teaching her, and so all others, that *women should avoid in their private conferences, unnecessary talke of men*. Note moreover, that *it is wisdom to prevent dangers, and not expose our selves into perill, when we may avoid it* <Num. 14.42-3>.<sup>514</sup> [p. 240] *Naomi* knew the danger of those times, and how wickedly many were bent, and ready to abuse a poore yong woman, and a stranger, and therefore shee teacheth *Ruth* to be wise to prevent the same: for if we unnecessarily

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Bernard's reference to Tit. 2.3-4 does not specify parental advice but rather the teaching of young women by aged women, and it appears to derive from Lavater's adoption of the language of this passage in Titus in exhorting old women to follow Naomi in rightly teaching the younger (Lavater 88v-89r).

<sup>513</sup> Both Lavater and Topsell, in their expositions of this verse, engage in more discussion than Bernard of the importance of women in their own society being in company if they are away from home. Lavater recognises that maidens cannot always be at home but insists on their having honest company and (anticipating Ruth Chapter 3) staying at home at night and not giving rise to suspicion of their sexual misbehaviour (88r-88v). Lavater not only notes similarly to Bernard that some women talk with men, but also criticises their going to dances and banquets to acquire husbands (89r). Topsell begins his comments on the dangers of women working unaccompanied by making observations which are evidently adopted by Bernard – women are soon oppressed and quickly conquered, as evidenced by Dinah (Topsell 150). However, Topsell adduces the additional biblical instance of Abigail taking servants with her to David, and makes an application to daughters and servants in his own society (150-1). He also argues the need in general to avoid mixed company of men and women (151-2). Bernard perhaps considers that his moralising on women's conduct in their relations with men is thoroughly expressed in his exposition of Ruth Chapter 3.

<sup>514</sup> Bernard goes on to develop the point made by Topsell, that Naomi advised Ruth to follow Boaz's instruction to stay with his maidens to avoid dangers should the reapers deny her in another field (Topsell 149).

cast our selves into danger, we doe tempt God, which we may not doe <Matt. 4.7; Deut. 6.16; Ps. 91.11<sup>515</sup>>: It is not our way: and therefore we have no promise of protection, and God hath punished his owne people for so doing, as we may see in the Israelites <Num. 14.42, 45>, and in good *Josias*, who escaped not correction <2 Chron. 35.22-3>. And therefore let us learne to be wise to prevent dangers, and not carelesly expose our selves thereinto. Nature teacheth this to beasts, much more reason should perswade man unto it, and Religion alloweth it, and commendeth that prudent man, that seeth the evill, and avoids it <Prov. 22.3>, when they have no just cause to the contrary; I meane the evils of trouble, crosses, and such like: for the evill of sin is ever to be avoided, of which it may be *Salomon* doth speake; yet is it wisdom to avoid unnecessary crosses, and troubles of this life, and such dangers as may procure our hurt, as *Jehoram* did by the advice of *Elisha*, discovering the armies of the Syrians unto him, that he might not be indangered by them <2 Kings 6<sup>516</sup>>. If here any object the certaine danger that *Micaiah* willingly did runne into, when he went to prophesie before *Ahab* who hated him, and such like: I answer, that men cast themselves into danger two wayes, first, by the vertue of their calling, either ordinary, or extraordinary, as did *Micaiah*, which men may not forsake for any trouble or [p. 241] danger whatsoever. The other is without a calling; such foole-hardinesse hath no assurance of a blessing; if they escape the perill, it is Gods great mercy, and not their deserving, and if trouble come upon them, they can have no comfort in it, but must take it as a Rod of correction, to teach them to be more wise afterwards.

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<sup>515</sup> Ps. 91.11-12 is the passage cited by the Devil when tempting Jesus, Matt. 4.6-7.

<sup>516</sup> Specifically, verses 8-10.

Verse 23. *So shee kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to gleane, unto the end of Barley harvest and of Wheat harvest, and dwelt with her mother in law.*

The obedience of *Ruth*, in following *Naomi* her advice, and her constant love unto her, in not departing from her.

*So shee kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to gleane.*] Concerning *Ruth* here we may learne, that *Children are to take the good counsell of their parents, and to follow the same*: as *Ruth* doth here, and as did *Jacob*,<sup>517</sup> yea *Moses* the advice of *Jethro*.<sup>518</sup> It is the note of a wise child, and a childs duety, if the counsell be wholesome and good <Prov. 13.1 and 1.8-9 and 23.22>. And it is a reproofe to rebellious children, which will not learne nor obey, like the sonnes of *Eli*,<sup>519</sup> and of *Samuel*.<sup>520</sup> but they paid for it,<sup>521</sup> as ever such shall doe.<sup>522</sup>

*Unto the end of Barley harvest and of Wheat harvest.*] All this time *Ruth* applied her selfe for profit, as being the time of gathering food for winter: she plaid the Ant, and not the Grashopper <Prov. 6.8>: For *it is good thrift, not to slack the time of our profit, which God in mercy affordeth to us*: this may we learne of the Ant, to which the Lord sendeth the [p. 242] Sluggard:<sup>523</sup> for riches are not for ever <Prov. 27.24>, nor the like time to get them, and therefore must we take the season offered, especially in harvest which calleth forth every one to take paines, to gather in Gods blessings for their life and maintenance. Perhaps some will say, That Christ willeth

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<sup>517</sup> See Gen. 28.7.

<sup>518</sup> See Exod. 18.24.

<sup>519</sup> See 1 Sam. 2.25.

<sup>520</sup> See 1 Sam. 8.3.

<sup>521</sup> The deaths of Hophni and Phinehas are recorded in 1 Sam. 4.11. The sons of Samuel do not come to a bad end, so far as the Bible relates, but they are superseded by the appointment of Saul.

<sup>522</sup> Bernard follows Lavater's emphasis on the duty of children (*Lavater* 89r), rather than focusing, like Topsell, on the duty of parents (*Topsell* 152).

<sup>523</sup> See Prov. 6.6.

us not to take care <Matt. 6.31, 34>. But doth he will ever any man not to labour? The care which Christ speaketh of, is immoderate care, care without faith, or care full of doubting, and little faith <Verse 30>, and that which is without care of Religion <Verse 33>, the minde being taken up wholly with the world; else men may, yea and ought to labour for the things of this life, to be provident for the time to come, and frugall in expences for the time present.<sup>524</sup>

*And she dwelt with her mother in law.*] That is, all that time of harvest and after.<sup>525</sup> This is noted, to shew *Ruths* love and constant affection towards *Naomi*, that no favour abroad or gaine reaped by the labour of her hands, could make her forsake her mother in law. Hence riseth a good lesson, that *childrens favour abroad and good gettings should not draw them from their poore parents, so long as they stand in need of their helpe*. For how can children ever shew themse[lv]es thankfull better than in such a case, where what they get, they can willingly bestowe it upon their poore parents, so maintaining them, who were the authours of their being, and instruments of God for their education? But, alas, the case is otherwise now. This *Ruth* the Moabitesse a heathen by birth, may rise up in judgement against such as shuld be naturall [p. 243] children, who having gotten from under their Parents, when they see they can live of themselves, they make no reckoning of<sup>526</sup> them, being altogether unwilling to live with them, and most of all to relieve them.<sup>527</sup>

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<sup>524</sup> This lesson on making the most of the harvest is not found in Lavater or Topsell (although Lavater praises constancy in work, 89v), which further illustrates Bernard's emphasis on the importance of labour.

<sup>525</sup> Here, Bernard contradicts Topsell's declaration that Ruth stayed with Boaz's maidens until the end of the barley and wheat harvests and then dwelt with Naomi again (Topsell 152).

<sup>526</sup> 'to make reckoning of': 'to hold or account of, to take heed of.' (OEDO).

<sup>527</sup> Bernard represents children's kindness to their parents as an example of thankfulness, an important quality he has emphasised before (pp. 170, 224-5, 234-5). In lamenting the deficiency of children's care for their parents in his own society, Bernard follows Lavater (Lavater 89v).

## CHAPTER III.

In this Chapter is *Naomi* her care, to provide a match for *Ruth*, to requite her labour and love towards her: wherein may be observed her advice, the execution thereof, and the good event of the same.

Verse 1. *Then Naomi, her mother in law, said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seeke rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?*

This is *Naomi* her resolution to provide a marriage for her daughter in law: it is propounded with an interrogation, to shew her full determination. Here note who resolveth, for whom, and what it is, and the end why.

*Then Naomi, her mother in law, said unto her, My daughter.*] Here *Naomi* deviseth how to requite *Ruth* her love and labour, which is by resolving to get a match for her; and this she doth, as a mother doth for her daughter, after that *Ruth* had so laboured, and now was at rest with her in the house. Of the terme *daughter* before,<sup>1</sup> and also of thankfulness, how good turnes should be requi- [p. 244] ted, (which here is *Naomies* purpose) I have spoken at large.<sup>2</sup>

*Shall I not seeke?*] As if she had said; Know it, my daughter, that I am resolved to seeke rest for thee <1 Cor. 7.36<sup>3</sup>>. *It is the Parents dutie to provide*

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 60-1, 160.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 170-1, 224-5, 234-5. In representing *Naomi's* matchmaking as thankfulness, Bernard follows Lavater (*Lavater* 85v, 91r). Bernard takes the additional step of referring the reader to his earlier discussions of thankfulness, so underlining the integrated nature of his commentary.

<sup>3</sup> In citing 1 Cor. 7 as being favourable to marriage, Bernard follows Topsell, who cites and refers to this chapter (157, 158, 159) in his argument that godly marriage is better than the unmarried estate. However, whereas Topsell explains away Paul's apparent disapproval of marriage in the chapter, Bernard at this point (as on p. 249) simply reads Paul as approving marriage.



*matches for their children.* So did God the generall Father, for his sonne *Adam*, *Abraham* for *Isaac*, and *Isaac* for *Jacob* <Gen. 2<sup>4</sup> and 24 and 28>; for children want judgement to make their choise, and are led more by fond affection, or by strength of lust, which is worse, then by reason and good discretion: but yeeld they were wise in their choise, yet are they not so to doe it without consent of Parents, but should doe as *Samson* did, who intreated his father and mother to get him for a wife, the maid which he liked <Judg. 14.1-2>. Let therefore Parents have a care of this dutie, and betimes provide for their children, as they shall see just cause, and so make choise, as one may be a mutuall helpe to another; for this end let them observe their natures, like somewhat in yeeres, in conditions, and body in some sort, that one may bee pleased with the other: then know their religion and vertues, that they may bee of one heart towards God; so shall they love one another much better, pray for one another, and have a fellow-feeling in every condition; yea, this will sweeten their estate unto them. When they have noted well these two, if with good natures and graces they can procure goods, it shall not bee amisse to helpe to beare the burthen of marriage. Such Parents are here to bee reprooved, which neglect this dutie, either of careles- [p. 245] nesse, wanting true love; or of wicked covetousnesse, for that they are not willing to spare any thing from themselves, though yet they have sufficient.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Specifically, verses 18-25.

<sup>5</sup> Bernard draws on both Lavater and Topsell in this exposition, and develops his argument for parental consent to marriage on pp. 26-7. The commentators contribute to the wider debate over the issue of parental consent to marriage from the late sixteenth century. An example of seventeenth-century manuals of casuistry, which engage in this debate, besides Joseph Hall's Cases of Conscience (1654), is Jeremy Taylor's Ductor Dubitantium (1660). Turning to the present passage and its connections with preceding early modern Ruth commentary, Lavater similarly declares that children should be counselled by their parents rather than following their own wicked affections (91v). Topsell observes that when parents are negligent and do not provide for their children, the children match themselves contrary to their parents' wishes (156). Bernard adds biblical instances of parents providing matches for their children and recommendations for how parents should choose spouses for their children. He follows Topsell in recognising the value of temporal goods in furthering marriage (Topsell 157). Bernard also, in referring to Samson making his choice but seeking his parents' consent, appears to concur with Lavater's exhorting parents not to constrain children to marry unwillingly and indicating that they should imitate Naomi who conferred with Ruth about the

*Rest for thee?]* So shee calleth the married estate. The word is, a place of rest to settle in <manwah of nwah *placide quievit*.<sup>6</sup>>: *Marriage estate is an estate of rest*: so heere called, and in chapter 1.9, in respect of the mind of all such as desire marriage, and have not the gift of continencie, they are restlesse. It is called therefore *portum iuventutis*,<sup>7</sup> because youth are tossed by lustfull thoughts, as the ship with the waves of the Sea, till they be married. *Mulieri* (saith one) *nulla est requies, donec nupserit*,<sup>8</sup> It may also be called rest, for the contentment and delight which one ought to have in the other, and in the blessing of posteritie, by the mercy of God. Seeing it is so called, let the married parties labor to make it an estate of rest and peace: and the meanes bee these:<sup>9</sup> First, to love one another intirely: to worke this, see the good things in one another, and cover the evill, and winke at defects, and bee as blind that way after marriage, as they bee before. Secondly, to performe duties of love one to another chearefully: so they have promised, so God commands them, and so the mutuall good of both requireth it, and true love will doe it. Thirdly, to beare one anothers infirmitie patiently, for they bee one; else this will make them two, if they cannot beare with one another, and forbear too, to keepe peace. Fourthly, to take their outward estate of God thankfully, and live [p. 246] in this respect contentedly; let them not thinke how better they might have bin; for such discontented thoughts breed but sorrowes, and help nothing at all to quietnesse, but

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proposed marriage (Lavater 91v). This is consistent with the perception that an element of choice by future spouses was permitted at this time (see discussion in connection with Lawrence Stone's The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800 in the Introduction section 5).

<sup>6</sup> 'he rested peacefully.'

<sup>7</sup> 'haven of youth'

<sup>8</sup> 'To the woman there is no rest, until she marries'.

<sup>9</sup> In this exposition Bernard takes on the field of a marriage guide, a popular type of conduct book in the early modern period. He thus develops Lavater's observation that many married people by their own faults acquire troubles (Lavater 91r) by indicating how to prevent this. Topsell recognises troubles in marriage because of the wickedness of the world and maintains that these troubles serve to show the couple's love, fidelity, patience and religion (157). Bernard's exposition elaborates the effort required from the couple for this.

rather to encrease discord. Fifthly, to pray daily one for another, and that fervently, that God would remove the hinderances of love, or give wisdom and patience to beare the same. Sixthly, and lastly, in every discontentment to lay the fault rather upon our selfe, then to cast it upon the other; let the husband thinke rather the cause to bee in himselfe, then in his wife; so the wife is rather to blame her selfe, then her husband. If thus the married would doe, faults would be soone amended, and jarres prevented: and the failing in these things, is the cause that marriage is not the estate of rest, but a miserable restlesse condition, and that through their owne sinnes and corruptions.

*That it may be well with thee.] Marriage is for the well-being of such as enter into that holy estate.* The husband is for a guide to the woman, and the woman is ordained for a meet helpe for the man <Gen. 2.18>. And therefore this is for confutation of those, which simply preferre single life before marriage; nay, doth not God say, *It is not good for man to be alone?* Marriage is called an honorable estate, and is commended farre before the other life in Scripture. It maketh two one, it is the holy meanes of a lawfull posteritie, and it is the estate in which the most holiest have lived, and in which Christ himselfe would bee borne, though conceived by the holy Ghost, and borne [p. 247] of his Mother a Virgin. Saint *Paul* indeed commendeth single life;<sup>10</sup> but not simply, but with respect unto the then present times, full of troubles and persecutions.<sup>11</sup> If Marriage bee then for well-being, let Parents take care

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<sup>10</sup> See 1 Cor. 7.1, 7-8, 32-4.

<sup>11</sup> Bernard in this opening part of his exposition of the lemma follows Lavater (91r) and Topsell (156-9) in advocating marriage over the unmarried estate. He presents the principal points made by his predecessors, Lavater's reference to Gen. 2, and Topsell's addressing of Paul's pronouncements on marriage in 1 Cor. 7, in a summary form. His concluding remarks on how to ensure the benefits of marriage also derive from his predecessors: Topsell declares that two are better than one (158); Lavater and Topsell comment on the accursedness of whoredom and adultery in people who have rejected marriage (*Lavater* 91r; *Topsell* 159); finally, Topsell observes that married people privately instruct children and servants so as to draw them to heaven (158).

to provide for their children matches, fit and commodious for Religion, for conditions and meanes of maintenance, for so shall it be well with them. And let such as be married, so make a right use of marriage, that it may be for their well-being, and the bettring of themselves; which stands in three things: First, in the mutuall societie and neere fellowship of one another; for two are better then one. Secondly, in preventing thereby incontinencie, and the sinfull lusts of the flesh. Thirdly, in begetting an holy posteritie, training them up in the instruction and information of the Lord, in whom their Parents doe live, after they be dead.

Verse 2. *And now is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley to night in the threshing floore.*

*Naomi* propoundeth to *Ruth*, the party whom she desireth to match her with; giving a reason, and shewing the opportunitie of time and place where to breake the matter unto him.

As *Naomi* affected<sup>12</sup> to doe *Ruth* good, so shee devised the meanes;<sup>13</sup> for, *A true friend is not in shew onely, or in wel-wishes, but in devising how to bring to passe what they desire, and to effect what truly they doe affect. Jonathan* wished well to *David*, and [p. 248] he devised meanes for his safetie <1 Sam. 19.2-3 and 20.12-13>. *Abraham* wished well to *Lot*, and therefore endeavoured to doe him good, and to recover him, when he was led away captive <Gen. 14<sup>14</sup>>. Where we then wish well, let us shew it, in counsell, in helpe, in countenance, and not be as

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<sup>12</sup> 'affect': 'To aim at, aspire to, or make for (something); to seek to obtain or attain.' (OEDO).

<sup>13</sup> In drawing attention to *Naomi*'s finding the means to provide for *Ruth*, Bernard follows *Topsell* (*Topsell* 155, 159-60). He goes on to develop a lesson from this.

<sup>14</sup> Specifically, verses 13-16.

such, which will not advise their friends of their owne accord, nor helpe them in adversitie, hardly countenance them, when any of note frowne upon them. Some are friends like *Peter*, in the time of his weakenesse, who followed his Master in trouble afarre off.<sup>15</sup> Some like *Pauls* friends, who forsooke him wholly in perill.<sup>16</sup> Some like *Jehosaphat*, who can speake well a word or two for a *Michaiah*, but not stand out for him, when he is sent by *Achab* to prison most unjustly.<sup>17</sup> Many friends there be, but yet few friends indeed.<sup>18</sup>

*And now is not Boaz of our kindred?*] How a kin to them, see chapters 1.1 and 2.1. This kindred she nameth, because of the Law in Deut. 25.5-6. of which afterwards in chapter 4.<sup>19</sup> Here wee doe see what ground she had to seek this match for *Ruth*, even the Law of God, as shee thought. Her ground in thus making choise was from God, and therefore there was more hope to speed, though in mans reason most unlikely.<sup>20</sup> Note, that *Godly Parents seeke to match their children where God alloweth*. *Abraham* will not match with the Canaanites, but sends into his owne countrie <Gen. 24<sup>21</sup>>, and thither *Isaac* and *Rebecca* send *Jacob*;<sup>22</sup> for as in other things, so in this they set God before them, looking to his liking and approbation, that they may expect his blessing. Therefore let such as in- [p. 249] tend to marry, marrie in the Lord, have his consent, and pray for his presence at the marriage-making, at

<sup>15</sup> See Matt. 26.58; Mark 14.54; Luke 22.54.

<sup>16</sup> See 2 Tim. 4.10.

<sup>17</sup> See 1 Kings 22.8, 27; 2 Chron. 18.7, 26.

<sup>18</sup> In this exposition, Bernard supplies biblical examples which illustrate his elaboration of Lavater's point that some people are liberal in their promises but do nothing in deed (often even though they could without troubling themselves, in which case they will even show envy if others help their friends) (*Lavater* 91r-91v).

<sup>19</sup> Specifically, verses 5, 10.

<sup>20</sup> At the outset of his exposition of Naomi's advice to Ruth, Bernard draws attention to Naomi's justification in the biblical levirate law. However, his observation that this was as Naomi thought opens the way for a criticism of the basis of her plan. A little later, he observes that Naomi erred in holding that Boaz was bound to marry Ruth because he was her kinsman (250). See Ruth 3.12.

<sup>21</sup> Specifically, verses 2-4.

<sup>22</sup> See Gen. 27.46 and 28.1-4.

which he will be, if it be after his will <1 Cor. 7.36>; that is, when parties marry lawfully, and in the feare of his Name. Other marriages he will not countenance, as these; first, such as bee made within degrees forbidden, though allowed by the usurped authoritie of the Popes forged Vicarship.<sup>23</sup> Secondly, with Infidels, as did the Jewes, and into which sinne fell *Salomon* <Neh. 13.25-6;<sup>24</sup> 1 Kings 11.1>. Thirdly, with Idolaters, though they professe the true God, and yet worship Idols, as did *Achab*; and therefore *Jehosaphat* his marrying of *Jehoram* his sonne with *Athaliah*, was unlawfull, and punished heavily by God:<sup>25</sup> such is the marriage of a Protestant with a Papist. Fourthly, with wretched worldlings, and such as be without Religion in truth and sinceritie <1 Cor. 5.10-11>; for if we have not ordinary familiaritie with the wicked <1 Cor. 5.11; 2 Thess. 3.6, 14>, with such as bee fornicators, covetous, extortioners, railers, drunkards, inordinate livers, idle without callings, and disobedient to the Word, blasphemers, ungodly, despisers of those that be good, lovers of pleasures mo[r]e then lovers of God, and such like <2 Tim. 3.2<sup>26</sup>>; if, I say, wee may not keepe familiar company with such, then certainly we may not marry with them; their birth, wealth, and conceited hope to win them, cannot make way for such marriages to them which feare God, and love their owne soules. Fifthly, with such as bee unjustly divorced: for that is to marry another mans wife, and to commit adulterie.<sup>27</sup> These marriages are made after the flesh, [p. 250] where the divell danceth, but God is displeased, and good Angels, and good men offended.

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<sup>23</sup> Bernard is objecting to the Pope's power of dispensation. Lavater finds difficulty in reconciling the levirate law with the prohibition on incest in Leviticus (*Lavater* 21 sermon 118r et seq.). Lavater is concerned with preventing others from following the example of Ruth and Naomi in contracting marriage within forbidden degrees, for he observes that the levirate law is no longer valid (*Lavater* 93r, 94r).

<sup>24</sup> Verses 23-9 are relevant.

<sup>25</sup> See p. 28 above.

<sup>26</sup> Verses 3-5 are also relevant.

<sup>27</sup> Bernard probably refers to Matt. 5.32.

*With whose maidens thou wast.*] These words are added, to shew what *Boaz* she meant, and also to give *Ruth* some hope of good successe. For *Ruth* might object three things, which *Naomi* in this verse preventeth.<sup>28</sup> She might have said: Alas, I am poore, what hope of one so rich? To which *Naomi* answereth, He is thy Kinsman, and therefore by law bound to marry with thee; though herein she did somewhat erre.<sup>29</sup> Againe, if *Ruth* had said, I am not knowne well to him, and I feare his dislike: *Naomi* here putteth her in mind with whom shee had been, even with *Boaz*, who had taken notice of her, and had been kind to her, and had spoken well of her; yea, in this she calleth a particular kindnesse of *Boaz* to her remembrance, who willed her to abide with his maidens. Thirdly, if *Ruth* had objected the want of opportunitie and fit occasion to speake to him; *Behold* (saith *Naomi*) *hee winnoweth this night barley in the threshing-floore*. So then note, *That warrant from God, experience of the love of man, and fit occasion to effect a matter, are strong inducements to attempt the same*. These made *Ester* to adventure to goe unto *Ahasuerus*, her calling from God, her experience of former favour, and the present cause requiring, and occasion offered to make triall. And where these concur, let us boldly doe our indeavour, with hope to effect what wee goe about.

*Behold.*] That is, See and consider the pro- [p. 251] vidence of God, it is as one would wish, it falleth out opportunely, as if God had decreed to bring it to passe:

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<sup>28</sup> 'prevent': 'To anticipate or meet beforehand (a want, desire, objection, question, command, etc.).' (OEDO).

<sup>29</sup> Here, Bernard makes it explicit that Naomi was wrong. In doing so, he indicates at this early point that Naomi's scheming was not justified. Lavater observes, following Nicholas of Lyra (MET 61), at the later point of Naomi's instruction to Ruth to await Boaz's response, that Boaz subsequently said that there was a nearer kinsman (Lavater 92r-92v). His subsequent expression of disapproval of Naomi's instructions is more forceful because of this observation. He returns to the existence of a nearer kinsman, noting the possibility of his being injured by Ruth's actions, in summing up his classification of Ruth's example (95v). Since Bernard notes the issue of the nearer kinsman earlier than Lavater, his reservations in this respect are balanced by the fact that Naomi's ensuing initial instructions to Ruth do not elicit his censure.

so *Naomi* observed Gods providence plainly:<sup>30</sup> for it appeareth manifestly, where and when hee decreeth to bring things to passe, so as we may say, Behold, the hand of the Lord! And this either for good, as in preventing *Mordecaies* destruction <Esth. 6.1, 3<sup>31</sup>>, the Widow of Sarepta<sup>32</sup> her famishment 1 Kings 17.10-14<sup>33</sup>>, *David* from the hand of *Saul* <1 Sam. 23.27<sup>34</sup>>, *Moses* from drowning <Exod. 2.5>, and *Joseph* from perishing in the pit <Gen. 37.24, 28>: or for evill, to bring judgement upon the wicked; as upon *Jezabel* and *Jehoram*, as God had threatned, catching them as it were in a trap, the one in the portion of *Naboth*, and the other in *Jezreel* <2 Kings 9.15, 21, 25, 30, 36>. For the Lord seeth all things, and his eyes are upon the wayes of men <Job 28.24 and 35.21<sup>35</sup>>, to bring his decree to passe by his power and providence.

Let us then cast our eyes about us, and observe Gods providence: for so shall wee see both his mercy and justice to praise him; it will make us patient and contented under every crosse, and carefully to relye upon him, when we see how his providence waiteth upon his promise, good will and pleasure. Yea, this will comfort us, and make us not to feare what man can doe unto us, seeing his hand is ready to helpe.

*Hee winnoweth barley to night in the threshing floore.*] For the threshing floores in those times, it seemeth, from the first of *Samuel*, chapter 23<sup>36</sup> and other places <Judg. 6.37;<sup>37</sup> Gen. 50.10; Num. 18.30; 2 Sam. 6.6 and 24.16>, that they were

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<sup>30</sup> Whereas Lavater does not mention providence at this point, and Topsell emphasises Naomi's 'dayly studie' of Ruth's marital prospects (*Topsell* 159-60), Bernard's own interest in God's providence is highlighted in his exposition.

<sup>31</sup> Verses 1-4 are relevant.

<sup>32</sup> 'Sarepta' is the Zarephath of the *AV*.

<sup>33</sup> Verses 8-16 are relevant.

<sup>34</sup> Verse 28 is also relevant..

<sup>35</sup> The correct reference is Job 34.21.

<sup>36</sup> Specifically, verse 1.

<sup>37</sup> The correct reference is Judg. 6.11.



abroad in the fields, as the wine-presses were: and this place sheweth, that *Ruth* went out of the citie thither. In such a [p. 252] place, *David* built an Altar to the Lord in the threshing floore of *Ornan* <1 Chron. 21.24;<sup>38</sup> 2 Chron. 3.1>. Of the manner how it was made, is not expressed in the Scripture. It may also seeme, that the winnowing was towards the evening in those hot countries, when the wind did arise, called, *The wind of the day*; or as in Genesis it is translated, *the coole of the day* <Gen. 3.8>. *Boaz*, though he winnowed not himselfe in person,<sup>39</sup> yet he may be so said to doe, in commanding his servants, hee there being a diligent over-seer, and a helper forward of the worke with his presence. Howsoever, this may we learne, that *It is no unseemelinese for men of birth, of place and wealth, sometime to follow in their owne persons meane labours of their calling*: as hee doth here winnowing of corne, *Gideon* his threshing, *Judah* his sheep-shearing, *Elisha* his plough. This they did not of base niggardlinesse, as loth to keepe servants to doe it, but to exercise themselves in labour, which is healthfull, to prevent idlenesse and ill fruits thereof, to be an example to others, as was *Julius Caesar*, who would goe bare-headed, and on foote, both in hot Sun-shine, and in foule weather often before his Souldiers <*Suetonius*<sup>40</sup>>; and as the Lord *Lacie*, chiefe Justice in Ireland, who tooke up stones to beare them to the building hee had in hand, to provoke the lazie Irish to take paines <*Irish Chronicle*>.<sup>41</sup> Which reproveth those which doe condemne them that so take paines,

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<sup>38</sup> Verses 18-26 are relevant.

<sup>39</sup> Bernard may be exhibiting reluctance to criticise hierarchical assumptions when he concedes that Boaz may not have winnowed in person. Lavater, by contrast, states explicitly that Boaz laboured himself (96v-97r). Topsell also concludes that the ancient nobility did not only delegate winnowing and threshing to their servants but did the work by themselves, and he portrays Boaz as winnowing his own corn alone (160). Bernard evidently agrees in principle with his predecessors strongly enough to argue, here and on pp.211-216, that there is a case for the wealthy having a calling or occupation; however, his reading suggests that he thinks they are justified in not undertaking very menial tasks.

<sup>40</sup> It is not clear where this example or the next one, referenced to the Irish Chronicle, come from.

<sup>41</sup> Here Bernard provides further examples of people of high status who did not disdain hard labour. His chief argument is an expanded version of his account on p. 214 of individuals in callings who were given advancement in life. Here, besides scriptural examples, he also gives the case from

being persons of worth, as if it were discredit to them, and to bee basely accounted of for so doing; when yet wee see out of the Scripture, men (as these proud fellowes hold them) of [p. 253] meane callings, chosen to high places; as *Moses* from keeping sheep, to be Ruler of Gods people; so *David* to be King; *Gideon* from threshing, to be Captaine over the hoast of Israel; *Elisha* from the plough, to be the Lords Prophet; so *Amos* from the herd; *Peter* from a poore fisher-mans estate, to be an Apostle: and the like we find in heathen historie of one *L.Q. Cincinnatus*, who was fetched from the plow, to be made Dictator in Rome, and after returned to husbandry againe <*Eutropius, Valerius Maximus*<sup>42</sup>>. Thus we see how great men did set themselves to callings, (now held base and meane by proud and riotous spirits) and also many highly advanced from meane places and low estate of life, for their worthinesse and vertuous industry for which they were honoured, how meane soever by birth or education: such were these Emperours, *Pertinax* an Artificers sonne; *Dioclesian* a Scriveners sonne; *Valentian* the sonne of a Shoemaker, and of a Gardiner came *Probus*.<sup>43</sup> Let our lazie and lewd Roysters, upstart Gentry, or such as come of worthy Ancestours, yet having no worthinesse in themselves, behold these, and learne to doe as *Maximinus Senior* did, who when he was Generall, did take such paines in meane matters, as others found fault with him. But he answered them, The greater I am, the greater paines will I take <*Quo maior fuero, tanto plus laborabo.*>.<sup>44</sup> If our Yongsters would thinke hereof, they would not scorne to take

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heathen history given by Bucer in the passage which Bernard cites on p. 212, of *L.Q. Cincinnatus*, and instances a number of men of humble origins who became emperors. He thus, characteristically, provides an incentive for following the examples of the behaviour he wishes to promote.

<sup>42</sup> *Eutropius* was a fourth-century historian who compiled an abstract of Roman history, the *Breviarium ab Urbe Condita*. *Valerius Maximus* lived in the first century A.D., and compiled a collection of anecdotes, *Memorable Doings and Sayings*.

<sup>43</sup> The dates these emperors reigned are as follows: *Pertinax*, January to March 193; *Diocletian*, 285-305; *Valentinian I*, 364-375; *Probus*, 276-282. See Christopher Scarre, *Chronicle of the Roman Emperors*.

<sup>44</sup> See section 6 of the biography of *Maximinus Senior* (Emperor 235-238) in the *Scriptores Historiae*

paines as they doe, and yet scorne not to live in a more base course, unworthy their Gentilitie of which they so much stand, and most unworthy their Christianity, [p. 254] which they too little regard. Whatsoever mens birth and estate be, yet ought they to labour in a calling, because God so commandeth <Gen. 3.19>, to avoid idlenesse, to prevent much evill, which commeth from idlenesse, to live not as Caterpillers,<sup>45</sup> but as profitable members in the Common-wealth, to be an example of wel-doing to others, and to be the better able to maintaine their estate and place, both to themselves and to their succeeding posterity also.

Verse 3. *Wash thy selfe therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee downe to the floore: but make not thy selfe knowne to the man, untill he shall have done eating and drinking.*

*Naomi* her counsell to her daughter in law, *Ruth*, shewing whither shee should goe, what to doe before, in preparing to goe thither, and how warily she should carry her selfe, for being knowne till after supper.

*Wash thy selfe therefore;*<sup>46</sup> That is, because I would have thee to goe to him, make thy selfe ready, and first wash thy selfe. *Washing is double,*<sup>47</sup> first inward, which the Apostle exhorteth unto <2 Cor. 7.1; Tit. 3.5>, and this is it *David* prayed for <Ps. 51<sup>48</sup>>, and without which none can enter into the Kingdome of God <John

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Augustae, a late Roman collection of lives of emperors before 284, vol. 2 pp.324-5.

<sup>45</sup> 'caterpillar': 'A rapacious person; an extortioner; one who preys upon society.' (OEDO).

<sup>46</sup> Whereas Lavater discusses washing and anointing in consecutive sentences (91v-92r) and Topsell treats them together (161-4), Bernard separates these topics in order to focus on issues relating to cleanliness before moving on to draw attention particularly to the wrongness of painting the face.

<sup>47</sup> Bernard is developing the point which Topsell makes at the end of his discussion of washing and anointing, that the Lord has provided for people both outwardly in their bodies by his creatures, and inwardly in their souls by his spirit (Topsell 164).

<sup>48</sup> Specifically, verses 2, 7.

3<sup>49</sup>>; with this washing are we to approach nigh unto God, as *Ruth* by her washing went unto *Boaz*.<sup>50</sup> The second is outward, and this is three fold: First, typically<sup>51</sup> under the Law, commanded to the Priests and people, when they drew neere to [p. 255] God, which was a type<sup>52</sup> of sanctification and holinesse <Exod. 40.31-2 and 19.10; Tit. 3.5; Ps. 26.6>. Secondly, superstitious,<sup>53</sup> as that of the Jewes taken up of themselves, and condemned by Christ <Matt. 15.2; Mark 7.3-4<sup>54</sup>>.<sup>55</sup> Thirdly, civill cleanliness, the washing of the body from all bodily uncleannesse, and this is here meant, and here commended unto us. This *outward civill cleanlinesse is praise worthy*. And this washing was used among the Jewes, and among the Heathen <2 Sam. 11.2 and 12.20; Exod. 2.19<sup>56</sup>>; *Eusebius* speaketh of *Johns* bathing himself <*Eusebius, historia ecclesiastica*.<sup>57</sup>>. To be cleanly, is healthfull to us, delightsome to others, and commendable. God required of his people cleanlinesse <Deut. 23.13<sup>58</sup>>. Our Christian profession is pure and holy, which outward cleannes well befitteth, and seeing it is of good report, we are to observe it <Phil. 4.8>. This reproveth two sorts: the first are such as be sluttish, nasty, and beast-like persons,

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<sup>49</sup> Specifically, verse 5.

<sup>50</sup> By comparing Ruth's (civil) washing to go to Boaz with people washing inwardly to approach God, Bernard distances himself from Topsell's claim that Naomi meant Ruth to wash and anoint herself in a comely manner to go to the man she wanted to marry (*Topsell* 161). At this early point in the threshing floor episode, Topsell seems to see Naomi as exploiting Ruth's seductiveness, although he later reformulates his assessment of Naomi's conduct when he observes that she did not command Ruth 'unseemely addressing of her selfe' (162).

<sup>51</sup> 'typical': 'Of the nature of, or serving as, a type or emblem; pertaining or relating to a type or types; symbolical, emblematic.' (*OEDQ*).

<sup>52</sup> 'type': 'That by which something is symbolized or figured; anything having a symbolical signification; a symbol, emblem' (*OEDO*).

<sup>53</sup> 'superstitious': 'Over-scrupulous; punctilious; extremely careful or particular.' (*OEDO*).

<sup>54</sup> The full story is given in Matt. 15.1-20 and Mark 7.1-23.

<sup>55</sup> Jesus had attributed the custom of washing the hands before eating to traditions which had no authority.

<sup>56</sup> Presumably Bernard takes it that Moses's drawing enough water for Jethro's daughters meant providing them with water to wash with, this being in addition to watering the flock.

<sup>57</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea (265-340). His *Ecclesiastical History* is the earliest historical account of the Christian Church. The reference to John the Baptist is in 1.11.5, vol. 1 pp. 80-1.

<sup>58</sup> Deut. 23.10-14 describes sanitary arrangements for the Israelite camp.

who hereby shew themselves carelesse of their credit, slothfull, or covetous, they be offensive, uncivill, and unwholesome <Read *Calvin* on Deut. 23.13.<sup>59</sup>>.<sup>60</sup> The other sort are they which will be cleanly, but yet spend too much time in trimming, washing, and starching,<sup>61</sup> and are so curiously neate, and so carefull to be fine and fare outwardly, as they spend their daies almost in doing nothing else; and so live a proud idle life, like the hautie Dames of Israel, in their bravery, walking with stretched forth necks, with wanton eyes, with tinkling feet, walking and mincing<sup>62</sup> as they goe, wanting humility, and often modesty in gesture, countenance, and gate: but let them reade and remember what the Prophet *Esay* threatneth against such lascivious wantons and luxurious minions, [p. 256] in the end of his third Chapter.<sup>63</sup>

*And anoynt thee.*] Anointing had a religious use, as we may see in Exod. 40,<sup>64</sup> Lev. 7;<sup>65</sup> Num. 7.1; 1 Sam. 9.16, which did type out<sup>66</sup> the graces of Gods Spirit, Ezek. 16.9; 1 John 2.27. This is the best anoynting, and to be laboured for. It had also a common use, as here, so in 2 Sam. 12.20, it was usuall, Matt. 6.17, for Gods blessings may be used not onely for meere necessity, but also for outward

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<sup>59</sup> The reference is to the second part of John Calvin's *In quinque libros Mosis commentarii*, translated by C.W.Bingham as *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses* (1852-1855). Deut. 23.13 is considered in vol. 2, pp. 45-7 of this translation. These commentaries were first published in Geneva in 1559-63, and reprinted in 1573, 1583 and 1595.

<sup>60</sup> Bernard follows Topsell in mentioning this sort of people as deserving reproof (Topsell 162) and adds a further sort who tend to the opposite extreme.

<sup>61</sup> In criticising people for spending too long in starching, Bernard puts a new light on a criticism of this upper-class practice made by Topsell. Topsell addresses the issue of whether starching was justifiable, and decides that it was 'if it bee sparingly used' (163). At the time of famine when Topsell was writing, starching was objected to in royal proclamations (eg. *A New Charge*, 1595) because of its consumption of grain. Topsell here recognises that objection, although he concludes that starching is indifferent. Bernard, by contrast, not writing in such a time of famine, emphasises the pride of those who starch excessively.

<sup>62</sup> 'mince': 'To walk with short steps and an affected preciseness or daintiness; to walk or move in an affected or effeminate manner.' (OEDO).

<sup>63</sup> See Isa. 3.16-24.

<sup>64</sup> Specifically, verses 9-11, 13, 15.

<sup>65</sup> Specifically, verses 12, 35-6.

<sup>66</sup> 'type': '*Theol.* To prefigure or foreshadow as a type; to represent in prophetic similitude. Also *type forth, out.*' (OEDO).

comelinesse and moderate delight. The Creatures of God may be used not onely for preservation of bodily life, but for beautifying of the body, and the better setting forth thereof, as it is in truth, and not counterfeited. Thus wine is given to glad the heart, and oyle to make the face to shine <Ps. 104.15>. And therefore may Christians lawfully use Gods creatures for outward comelines, and to preserve that outward seemlinesse which is Gods owne worke in us, by washing, and by anoynting. But here beware of excesse, that it be also seasonable, that it be to a good end; beware of pride, of wantonnesse, and learne to know the time of humiliation.

*Question. Here it may be questioned, Whether it be lawfull to paint the face, for it is but [an] oyle?*

*Answer.* Surely no. First, because this is not to preserve thy naturall beautie, by oyle to make it shine, but to make a counterfeit face: which is deceit and hypocrisie, which God hateth. We must lay aside all manner of hypocrisie <1 Pet. 2.1>; and this is one of them. Secondly, this is vanitie of vanities: for if beautie be vanitie <Prov. 31.30>, then much more the filthy [p. 257] counterfeit of it. It is great folly: for such spoyle their naturall comelinesse at length, as experience telleth, and the Prophet *Jeremie* speaketh of rending the face with painting <Jer. 4.30<sup>67</sup>>. Thirdly, this is great pride; for they dislike the Lords workemanship, and adulterate it, and would be held fairer then God ever made them, and doe proudly glory before men, of a counterfeit visage. Fourthly, it is not held a matter of good report and honesty,<sup>68</sup> which godly persons should follow after <Phil. 4.8>: but of dishonesty, such being judged to be light and lewd; in the Scripture it is the marke of a whore; and a whorish

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<sup>67</sup> This verse includes the observation ‘though thou rentest thy face with painting, in vain shalt thou make thyself fair’. ‘thou rentest thy face with painting’: ‘you enlarge your eyes with paint’ (Ryrie, *Ryrie Study Bible* note on Jer. 4.30).

<sup>68</sup> ‘honesty’: ‘Honourable character. a. Formerly in a wide general sense, including all kinds of moral excellence worthy of honour.’ (OEDO).

woman is described, Jer. 4.30; Ezek. 23.40, and an ungodly woman so practised it; even that Harlot and murtheresse *Jezabel* painted her selfe <2 Kings 9.30>: and we find by experience such to be wantons and lewdly given. Fiftly, the godly and learned Fathers have utterly condemned it. Saint *Cyprian* saith, It is the worke of the Devil: and they offer wrong to God, in despising his worke, and framing another of their owne <*De habitu virginum*.<sup>69</sup> *Est opus diaboli, et manus inferunt Deo, et cetera.*>. *Tertullian* calleth it the Devils businesse, unworthy a Christian <*De cultu feminarum*.<sup>70</sup> *Negotium diaboli, indignum Christiano.*>. Saint *Jerome* saith, that it is the fire of youth, the fuell of lust, and the signe of an unchast mind <*Ignis iuventutis, fomentum libidinis, et impudicae mentis i[n]diciu[m]: Epistola ad Marcellam*.<sup>71</sup>>. Saint *Ambrose* saith, They which muse or set their minds upon the adulterie of the countenance, doe so also upon the adulterating of chastity <*De adulterio vultus meditantur adulterium castitatis, et cetera*.<sup>72</sup>>. So as these godly men thinke of them but as of whores, the Devils servants, betrayers of chastitie, and unworthy to be accounted Christians. Let such therefore as never used it, beware of it, and such as have, repent, and such as doe, [p. 258] abandon and forsake it: for as verball lying is forbidden, so actuall also; such cannot looke upon God as his Creatures, but as counterfeits, and such as be of the Devils making; they see not their owne naturall face in a glasse, but the counterfeit of another, one perhaps damned in hell for whoredome already. Such as have used this sinfull practice, and have turned to God, have repented of this, as of an accursed worke of the flesh, and as proceeding from Satans instigation. Lastly, no modest Matron ever used it, but chaste hearts have

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<sup>69</sup> ‘Of the nature of maidens.’ See T.C. Cyprianus (St. Cyprian), *The Writings of Cyprian* 344.

<sup>70</sup> ‘Of the dress of women.’ See Q.S.F. Tertullianus, *The Writings of Q.S.F. Tertullianus* 320.

<sup>71</sup> The passage referred to here is not in a letter to Marcella but to Furia (Letter 54). See E.S. Hieronymus (St. Jerome), *Select Letters of St Jerome* 240-1.

<sup>72</sup> See Aurelius Ambrosius (St. Ambrose), *De virginitate* (‘Of virginity’) column 207.

always detested it, and therefore is it carefully to be avoided.

*And put thy raiment upon thee;]* That is, thy best apparell, or such as thou hast put upon thee handsomely. Concerning apparell I will speake somewhat at large.<sup>73</sup> In innocencie there was no need of rayment: *Adam* and *Eve* in that estate lived naked, and were not ashamed, neither was there cause, for that they had not sinned; but after the fall, it was of necessity to put on apparell, to cover our nakednesse, for preservation of our bodies, and to defend them from extreme cold, heate, and from hurts which they are subject unto in going naked. So then, now we should have care for rayment, for our selves, for such as depend upon us <Prov. 31.21>, and for the poore, as *Job* had <Job 31.19>.<sup>74</sup> Touching this necessity of wearing apparell, it is agreed upon on all hands, nature teacheth it, and need inforceth it, and herein to have not onely one sute, but change also for shift, if we be able; for it is lawfull to have change of rayment, yea to [p. 259] weare costly apparell, so it be comely. Of which I will speake in order. We may have change of rayment,<sup>75</sup> there is a necessity in it, a cleanlinesse also, and *Joseph* in love gave to *Benjamin* five changes of rayment, for him to weare <Gen. 45.22>. If any object our Saviour his forbidding two coats <Matt. 10.10>: We must know, it was no absolute forbidding: for there he also forbids providing of money for their journey, and other things else. But this was to

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<sup>73</sup> In engaging with the subject of apparel, Bernard follows Topsell (Topsell 164-9). Lavater does not write at any length on apparel. Topsell's and Bernard's views contribute to a wider discussion of apparel, which includes the chapter on apparel by Richard Brathwait in his *The English Gentlewoman* (1631) (Brathwait 1-25). Topsell, Bernard and Brathwait all begin with the need for clothes arising from Adam's sin, and there is some overlap in their ensuing observations although there are differences, which are pointed out in the footnotes which follow.

<sup>74</sup> Bernard does not take the opportunity, as Topsell does, of berating the rich for not clothing the poor (Topsell 166, 167-8). This shows Bernard's focus on the topic of apparel, charity being dealt with elsewhere in the commentary.

<sup>75</sup> In maintaining that it is lawful to have change of apparel, Bernard follows Topsell (Topsell 165, 167). However, Topsell also claims that it was usual to have changes of garments in the ancient world because of the consciousness of sin. Furthermore, change of apparel is now more necessary because of the steadily increasing deterioration of the physical and moral state of the world (165). By contrast, Brathwait focuses on the error of excess in the possession of change of apparel (12, 14-15).



shew, that they were to make speed, and also to teach them to depend upon his providence; for he undertooke to provide for them in this journey. And by this experience of Christs mercy towards them, he would teach them how to trust in God, when hee was to send them abroad into all the world after his Ascension. And therefore the begging Fryers have hence no ground for their idle life, and for their having but one coate. True it is, that to have changes of rayment, and to see our brother naked, having no cloathes to put on, and yet we not supply his want, were an unmercifulnesse, if so by our neglect of him, he should perish: otherwise we may weare change of rayment, yea and put on costly also, with changeable colours, and ornaments upon. *Salomon* wore costly attyre: so his wife <Ps. 45<sup>76</sup>>, *Joseph* <Gen. 41.42>, *Mordecai* <Esth. 8.15>, and *Esau* in *Isaacs* house <Gen. 27.29<sup>77</sup>>: they wore also garments of divers colours: so did *Joseph* in *Jacobs* house <Gen. 37.7<sup>78</sup>>, and *Tamar Davids* daughter <2 Sam. 13.18>; and *Mordecai* was clad in white, blue, and purple <Esth. 8<sup>79</sup>>. And as for ornaments, as earerings, bracelets, chaines, rings, Jewels of gold and silver, the Lord allowed [p. 260] them to his people, and to weare them upon them <Exod. 32.2>; and so did *Rebecca* weare such, sent by *Abraham* for *Isaacs* wife <Gen. 24.22-3>: they be made for mans use; and therefore the godly using them, and God allowing them, wee may use now our Christian liberty therein. But here wee must observe decencie, which is a comelines befitting the person of every one. And here must be considered, first, age, young or old: for the same color and fashion befit not both alike. Secondly, the sex, man and woman; for these must be distinguished, as God ordained in *Moses* Law:<sup>80</sup> nature it selfe, reason, and lawes of

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<sup>76</sup> Specifically, verses 13-14.

<sup>77</sup> The correct reference is Gen. 27.15.

<sup>78</sup> The correct reference is Gen. 37.3.

<sup>79</sup> Specifically, verse 15.

<sup>80</sup> See Deut. 22.5.

well governed Common-weales doe so ordaine also <Vide K[e]ckermannus,<sup>81</sup> *de politeia, liber 1, caput 10.*<sup>82</sup>>.<sup>83</sup> Thirdly, the profession and calling of persons, and the difference in place; for some be publike, some bee private, which must bee looked unto. It is therefore reproveable for publike persons out of basenesse,<sup>84</sup> not to goe as their place requireth; and for private persons to goe beyond their calling, and their condition of life, although it bee not above their habilitie; for this breedeth confusion and discord: when such also as by profession should be grave, as Scholers, and Ministers, yet doe goe Ruffian like, it is worthy of reproofe, and punishment also.<sup>85</sup> Fourthly, the manner of wearing must be observed; it must bee comely, with shamefastnesse and modestie <1 Tim. 2.9>, both in men and women;<sup>86</sup> we must so weare our apparell, as grace and vertue, and not corruption of heart and vice should appeare to bee in us. The vertues which must appeare in us by our attire, are these: First, is *modestie*; for raiment was to cover our shame,<sup>87</sup> and [p. 261] therefore that whorish fashion of going with naked brests, and so low uncovered, as some doe, is to be abhorred of modest women, and chaste virgins. *Sulpitius Gallus*, a Heathen

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<sup>81</sup> David Mealand (Edinburgh University) has identified the abbreviation here in the 1628 edition, 'Kick.', as a misprint. It should be 'Keck', that is, Keckermannus.

<sup>82</sup> *Systema Disciplinae Politicae* pp. 201-15.

<sup>83</sup> Brathwait draws attention to the recent commixture of male and female clothes, with feminine skirts being matched with masculine doublets (10). Linda Woodbridge examines the transvestite controversy the origins of which she traces to about the 1570s, when some women started to wear masculine clothes (139).

<sup>84</sup> 'baseness': 'Moral turpitude, reprehensible cowardice or selfishness, contemptible meanness; an act or trait of this character.' (OEDQ).

<sup>85</sup> Bernard, in condemning dressing contrary to the social hierarchy, repeats a concern expressed by Topsell (*Topsell* 167, 168). Brathwait also criticises this (13). See the Introduction section 3 for Bernard's emphasis on hierarchy in society.

<sup>86</sup> In 1 Tim. 2.9 St. Paul is writing of women. Bernard applies the prescription to men too. He evidently has in mind the men in his audience, or wants to make clear there is some sense of equity between the expectations of both sexes.

<sup>87</sup> Topsell (166) and Brathwait (3) make this point but Bernard here chooses to apply it specifically to the issue of women who expose their bodies to an indecent degree which he raised on p. 173, and to which he returns on pp. 323-4. This issue is also raised by Brathwait in his discussion of apparel: 'Eye those *rising mounts*, your *displayed breasts*, with what shamelesse art they wooe the shamefaste passenger' (8).

Romane,<sup>88</sup> fell out with his wife, because shee went abroad with her face uncovered, and said to her, The law limits my sight unto thee,<sup>89</sup> to which thou art to approve<sup>90</sup> thy beauty, and to become faire and lovely: but to bee willing to bee seene beautifull to others, must needs bring suspition of an ill mind, and a staine<sup>91</sup> withall. I wish husbands to bee *Sulpitius*-like to such wives as goe thus wantonly bare-brested, shewing how naked their hearts be unto lustfull practices. But some foolish and harlotrie husbands doe delight to see their wives and daughters to goe so; they be like *Assuerus*, who will have *Vashti* to come forth to shew her selfe; but I wish the wives in this thing like *Vashti*, and not to yeeld to their drunken humoured husbands to goe so immodestly:<sup>92</sup> but they are, perhaps, rewarded as they justly deserve sometime: for can the shop-windows alway stand open, and no customers come at any time to buy ?<sup>93</sup> Secondly, is *gravitie* according to yeeres, and therefore all fantastick, light, vaine and daily strange fashions, now in one, then in another, is folly and vanitie, apish toying, and argueth great levitie of mind, condemned by the Word <Zeph. 1.8>, and by all sober and grave persons. Thirdly, is *frugalitie*, for excessive cost is unthriftinesse, and herein a great consumption to a mans estate, and an argument of idlenesse, if men commonly goe costly. The rich [p. 262] Glutton is taxed for going costly, and fairing daintily every day, which brought him to hell at last <Luke 15<sup>94</sup>>.<sup>95</sup> Fourthly, is *humilitie*: for indeed our rayment from the first cause, is a signe

<sup>88</sup> Sulpicius Galus was a Roman consul, 243 BC. Bernard will have found the story in Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Doings and Sayings* 6.3.10, vol. 2 pp. 40-1.

<sup>89</sup> Bernard has obscured the meaning of the words in Valerius Maximus, perhaps because he wants to include men in his reproof. What Sulpicius says is 'the law limits you to my eyes only'.

<sup>90</sup> 'approve': 'To display or exhibit to advantage.' (OEDO).

<sup>91</sup> 'stain': 'A morally defiling effect on the character or conscience; a grave blemish on a person's reputation; a mark of infamy or disgrace, a stigma.' (OEDO).

<sup>92</sup> See Esth. 1.10-12. According to Bernard, in this instance, in which husbands show themselves to be poor guides, women may disobey them. For him, immodesty in women is worse than refusing to be subject to their husbands.

<sup>93</sup> The shop-windows image also occurs on p. 173.

<sup>94</sup> The correct reference is Luke 16.19-31.

of our rebellion against God, and that wee have lost our innocency; and therefore we have no more cause to be proud thereof, then a malefactor, of his halter, though it be golden.<sup>96</sup> It is reprov'd as a fault in the daughters of *Judah*, to be so proud of their attire <Isa 3<sup>97</sup>>: and we have more reason to weepe, then to wax high-minded by this covering of our shame and nakednesse. I wish wee were like one *Pambo* a godly man being at Alexandria, and there seeing a woman proud of her attire, fell a weeping; and being asked why he so wept, said thus, Two causes moove me; the one, to consider the perdition of this woman; and the other, for that I beeing a Christian, cannot study so much to please Christ by innocencie of life, as shee doth hereby desire to please filthy and dishonest men <*Petrus de Natalibus, Ecclesiastica historia, liber 8, caput 1.*<sup>98</sup>>. Fifthly, is *Pietie*: when in time of humiliation and dayes of abstinence, we goe as such should, who feelee the hand of God, and apprehend his displeasure against sinne; and when we so aray our selves daily, as that modesty, gravity, frugality, and humilitie may appeare therein; for why should we not even in our clothing set forth our profession, and thereby grace our Religion? And this piety shall appeare, if when we garnish the body, wee neglect not to beautifie the soule with learning and Religion; for a man in rich clothes, without

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<sup>95</sup> The reasoning regarding the weight attached to plain, as opposed to costly, dress is considered by William Perkins on a number of occasions in the section concerning apparel (pp. 559-83) in his *Whole Treatise of the Cases of Conscience* (1606). In particular, spending on superfluous dress prevents one from applying one's income to the relief of the poor and other worthy causes (Perkins, *Whole Treatise* 582).

<sup>96</sup> Reference is made to the striking image of the halter regarding pride also by Topsell (166) and Perkins (*Whole Treatise* 580-1), as well as by Brathwait (3). This suggests that Brathwait may have read at least Bernard's discussion, which is similar to his, or at least indicates that the four writers were engaging in the same debate about apparel.

<sup>97</sup> Specifically, verses 16-24.

<sup>98</sup> *Petrus de Natalibus* was a fourteenth-century Italian bishop. Bernard refers to a story in *Petrus's Catalogus Sanctorum*, a compilation of information about the lives of the saints, first published in print in 1493, and reissued in a number of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century editions (Kirsch, Internet source). Bernard evidently cites from memory, and gives the title a Protestant colour. Furthermore, he does not give the correct location of the story – rather than book 8 chapter 1 it should be book 6 chapter 38 (fo. cxv v).

other better qualities and endowments of mind, [p. 263] is, as *Diogenes*<sup>99</sup> said, a sheepe in a golden fleece; and yet such sheepe have wee in our English pasture, for want of grace, and better education, having nothing to set them out withall, but the braverie of their clothing, which *Augustus Caesar* called, The Ensigne of pride, and the nest of luxurie<sup>100</sup> <*Vexillum superbiae, et nidus luxuriae.*<sup>101</sup>>; which wee finde in these dayes to bee young mens overthrow, a let to good house-keeping, an enforcing to enhaunsing of rents in Landlords, and in others to fall to ill shifts, when their owne meanes of lands and revenewes faile them. And thus much for this point.

*And get thee downe to the floore.*] Take the opportunitie offred, to procure thy welfare: so she is made by *Naomi* her advice, to goe to *Boaz*, and to demand marriage of him; which might seeme not fitting,<sup>102</sup> but by *Moses* law it was allowed to the woman widow without children, to claime marriage of the next kinsman, if he neglected to take her <Deut. 25<sup>103</sup>>: and it was no more immodestie for women to claime that right then, then now for one betrothed to challenge the man for her husband:<sup>104</sup> for where God alloweth the thing, it taketh away the scandall and

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<sup>99</sup> Diogenes the Cynic, 404-323 BC, was a Greek philosopher who was notorious for his rejection of civilised propriety. His joke about the sheep in a golden fleece is mentioned in Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 6.47, vol. 2 pp. 48-9.

<sup>100</sup> 'luxury': 'The habitual use of, or indulgence in what is choice or costly, whether food, dress, furniture, or appliances of any kind.' (OEDO).

<sup>101</sup> It has not been possible to trace this quotation.

<sup>102</sup> Bernard draws attention to the question of whether Ruth's approach to Boaz was appropriate even before coming to Naomi's instructions as to how Ruth should behave once on the threshing floor. Lavater, on the other hand, only amplifies the instructions for the approach, reserving his adverse opinion until he has outlined verse 4. Similarly, Topsell's earliest weighing up of the proposed approach is to express dismay when he comes to the details of the procedure she was to follow on the threshing floor. Here, he even observes that it may seem that Naomi was advising Ruth to 'play the whoore' (169). It is characteristic of his formulating and reformulating of his views that he alludes critically at this point to Ruth's earlier advised adornment, whereas he previously emphatically approved of her dressing up (164 and 168-9). Indeed, Topsell goes on to answer hypothetical objections to Naomi's plan (including Ruth's dressing up) only to insist on the wrongness of following the example (169-171). Bernard's interpretation of Ruth's approach, by contrast, is more consistent in that from this early point he expresses doubt about Naomi's plan. His subsequent consideration of Naomi's final instructions lead him to express definite disapproval (266-7).

<sup>103</sup> Specifically, verse 7.

<sup>104</sup> This comparison between the levirate arrangement and betrothed couples in the early modern period is found in Topsell at the end of his exposition of Naomi's advice (171). The commentators

offence, which otherwise might justly bee given, and so others justly bee offended therewith. Which is not a small comfort against the uncharitable censure of unadvised persons.<sup>105</sup>

*But make not thy selfe knowne to the man, untill he shall have done eating and drinking.]* Go she must, but so warily is shee to behave her selfe, as shee should not discover her selfe, nor make her mind [p. 264] knowne, until he had supped, and was laid downe to rest: so as her mind must be shewed in private, and to him alone. *The night, and in private, make modest persons utter more freely their thoughts, then otherwise they would in the light, and before company.*<sup>106</sup> The phrase of eating and drinking, implyeth feasting, as appeareth hence from verse 7 and from other Scriptures <Matt. 24;<sup>107</sup> Isa. 22.13; Exod. 32.6; 1 Kings 4.20>: so then at such a time as this, it may seeme, the Israelites feasted and made merry, as a signe of gladnes and rejoycing in the Lords blessings. Of feasting, I will speake afterwards in verse 7.<sup>108</sup> Here note, that *Naomi* held it the best time to speake of marriage, when *Boaz* had well eaten and drunken; for then are men more apt to speake freely, and to promise their good will, then at other times; this *Naomi* knew well, and therefore advised

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are drawing attention to the status of betrothal in their time, and Bernard expands on the subject on pp. 294-5.

<sup>105</sup> Bernard at this point is more dismissive of the possibility of offence than he is in verse 14 when Boaz warns that it should not be known that a woman was on the threshing floor (321-2).

<sup>106</sup> Bernard's statement here can be interpreted by considering observations by Topsell, at a point when he is approving Naomi's advice, and Lavater, who is simply disapproving. Topsell answers the hypothetical objection to Naomi's plan that Naomi had an ulterior motive in telling Ruth not to let herself be known to Boaz until he had gone to rest with the explanation that she did so in order that they might talk together more freely about her marriage (170). Topsell's explanation, recognisable in Bernard's statement, reads as a commendable course of action, preferable to other alternatives: Ruth might have come before supper (when there would have been insufficient time, and, in any case, Boaz would not have met her in his lodging) or she might have gone to Boaz's house in the daytime, when she would have been shamed in dealing publicly with her marriage. By omitting Topsell's alternatives, the second of which corresponds with that of the medieval Jewish Anonymous Rabbi (BJE 126), Bernard does not definitely distance himself from Lavater's sardonic observation: 'The night also a man being alone with a woman alone, doth make manie marriages.' (Lavater 92v). This indicates that Bernard has reservations about Naomi's advice.

<sup>107</sup> Specifically, verse 38.

<sup>108</sup> See pp. 271-3.

*Ruth* to make use of it. Which beeing so, it should make men at such times more silent, and more observant of their speeches.<sup>109</sup>

Verse 4. *And it shall be when he lyeth downe, thou shalt marke the place where he shall lye, and thou shalt goe in, and uncover his feet, and lay thee downe, and he will tell thee what thou shalt doe.*

The rest of *Naomi* her advice to *Ruth*, what she was to doe, when she came to the threshing floore[:] observe where *Boaz* lay, then she her selfe to lye downe; and the end, to know his mind, and what she should doe.

*And it shall be when he lyeth downe.] After labour [p. 265] followes rest, and the night is appointed for the same, to refresh the wearied limbs: so the Psalmist teacheth <Ps. 104.23>, and Jacob practised <Gen. 28.11>; and this is the right use of time. Let us spend the day in labour, and take the benefit of the night for rest, with thanks to God, and prayer for a blessing; and not bee as wild beasts, as some men bee, who make the day their time of rest, and the night their walking time, as fit to goe abroad to raven for their prey: or to spend it in unlawfull and lewde courses, as ill as theft.*

*That thou shalt marke the place where he shall lye.] This is advised, lest she should in the night mistake: for warie observation preventeth error. This sheweth also, that Boaz had not any certaine set place to lye downe in, but to lye, as best liked himselfe, in the floore. In those times they had no care of stately lodging; they were not effeminate and slothfull, which make us now to seeke for soft bedding, which*

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<sup>109</sup> Bernard unambiguously disapproves of *Naomi*'s manipulativeness in taking advantage of *Boaz*'s postprandial good humour.

breedeth lust, encreaseth sloth, and maketh the body more tender, and so lesse able to endure paines.<sup>110</sup>

*And thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet.*] Though *Naomi* aimed to make *Ruth Boaz* his yoke-fellow, yet she teacheth her to proceed in humility, to goe to his feet, and to lye downe there: For *humilitie is not any let, but the way to advancement*, and the reward thereof is riches, and glory, and life <Prov. 15.33 and 18.20<sup>111</sup> and 22.4>. Let all them which hope for preferment, labour for humilitie: for God giveth such grace and favour, the humble in spirit shall enjoy glorie <Prov. 3.34 and 29.23>: upon *Marie* her lowlines did the Lord look <Luke 1.48>: [p. 266] *David* was humble in his owne eyes, and obtained great glorie:<sup>112</sup> and *Abigail* by so wise and humble behaviour, purchased favour in *David's* eyes. On the contrary, by pride commeth confusion, as may appeare in *Absalom* and *Adoniahs* attempt to the Kingdome; for shame accompanieth it; and pride goeth before destruction, and a high mind before the fall <Prov. 11.2 and 16.18>.<sup>113</sup>

*And lay thee downe, and he shall tell thee what thou shalt doe.*] *Naomi* was well perswaded of *Boaz* his honestie, and that he would well advise *Ruth*: for *good counsell may be looked for of those that bee truly religious, and wise withall*, as *Boaz* was. And there is no doubt of their readinesse, whom experience hath made knowne to be loving and kind. This is it which made *Naomi* to speake thus confidently, that *Boaz* would tell *Ruth* what she should do. But here it may bee demanded, *Whether Naomi did well to advise Ruth to use this meanes, to trie Boaz his minde?* The

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<sup>110</sup> Bernard censures the luxurious lifestyle of affluent people in his own time. Following Topsell (Topsell 179-80), he focuses on hard lodging in commenting on verse 7 (RR 273).

<sup>111</sup> The correct reference is Prov. 18.12.

<sup>112</sup> Bernard may have in mind 1 Sam. 18.23.

<sup>113</sup> *Naomi's* instruction that *Ruth* should audaciously uncover *Boaz's* feet and lie down seems a strange illustration of humility. Bernard's argument is certainly at odds with Topsell's view that *Naomi* was counselling her to play the whore (Topsell 169).



manner<sup>114</sup> seemeth not to bee good nor approoveable, and my reasons be these: First, *Naomi* her counsel and advice to have *Ruth* to goe to *Boaz* to claime the marriage, was erroneous; for hee was not the next kinsman <Verse 12>, and therefore she should not have come thus first to him.<sup>115</sup> Secondly, *Boaz* his speech implyeth, that it was not a matter of good report for them two to be thus alone together, if they had been seene so <Verse 14>.<sup>116</sup> Thirdly, there was some shew and appearance of evill, which should bee avoided <1 Thess. 5<sup>117</sup>>.<sup>118</sup> Fourthly, because heere was an

<sup>114</sup> In observing that the manner seems wrong, Bernard follows Lavater (95r), who recognises the levirate justification for Ruth having a claim on Boaz but disputes the ways and means of Naomi's plan (93r). Here, Lavater, in turn, develops the analysis of Nicholas of Lyra. Nicholas, regarding Naomi's advice, notes the levirate justification but condemns the method, that is, acting in the dark (MET 61).

<sup>115</sup> Bernard puts as his first objection, not the simple fact of a woman and a man being alone together at night, but the complication of the nearer kinsman. Lavater also notes this as his first doubtful reaction to Naomi's plan (92r) and returns to it (95v). Here, Lavater explains the issue in a way similar to Nicholas of Lyra, who also addresses it. Nicholas criticises Naomi because her advice could have led to Ruth's injuring the nearer kinsman by going to Boaz should the nearer kinsman not have waived his right (MET 61). Bernard and Lavater are evidently concerned with the correct observance of the law, but their anxiety is also seen to arise from the immorality of Ruth's going to 'a wrong man' (RR 274).

<sup>116</sup> What others might have thought or said had they seen Ruth and Boaz together is a matter which exercises all three early modern commentators when they come to verse 14, and Lavater too raises it in commenting on Naomi's instructions. He states that people would have thought that she came for whoredom or theft (95r).

<sup>117</sup> Specifically, verse 22. This verse is frequently alluded to by the early modern commentators on *Ruth* in their exposition of the threshing floor episode. Lavater, expanding on Naomi's instructing Ruth to act with an outward appearance of evil contrary to 1 Thess. 5, maintains that the devices Naomi instructed Ruth to employ were a means by which young women were led to wickedness by bawds (95r). His implication that Naomi was making Ruth appear to engage in the sin of prostitution may also be meant by Bernard here. In their expositions of Boaz's admonition in Ruth 3.14, the commentators develop their use of St. Paul's injunction. Lavater points out (as Rashi makes Ruth say of herself, BJE 107) that a woman who appears a harlot may be judged to be one (108v). Topsell and Bernard also note the danger of adverse judgement (Topsell 199, RR 321). Lavater also introduces the concept that obeying St Paul's injunction prevents offence. He perceives in Boaz a concern that others should not be offended by the knowledge Ruth had been with him. He derives from this the conclusion that Boaz teaches the lesson that the appearance of evil may be an offence (Lavater 108r). Similarly, Topsell, having noted the offence given by talking with a woman privately and alone, represents Boaz here as not wishing to give any occasion of offence because we must abstain from all appearance of evil (197). Topsell furthermore goes on to instance the appearance of evil in his society (197-8) and to draw attention to the dangers of falling into sin (198-9). Like Lavater and Topsell, when Bernard expounds Boaz's admonition to Ruth he uses 1 Thess. 5.22 in connection with offence. He refers to the verse to condemn offences (RR 321-2). Thus, the commentators move from a simple reading of 1 Thess. 5.22 to a demonstration of its value in preventing anything that might lead others astray.

<sup>118</sup> In her autobiography, Anne Halkett also makes a point in connection with evil appearances: 'I shall advise all, never to thinke a good intention Can justify what may be scandalous. For though ones actions be never so innocent, yet they cannot blame those who suspect them guilty when there is

occasion of sinning offred, though not taken, nor intended; because fleshli- [p. 267] nesse is that sinne to which most are apt, and the most excellent have fallen into it; as appeareth in righteous *Lot*, strong *Samson*, wise *Salomon*, and zealous *David*.<sup>119</sup> Yet for all this ill advice and manner of doing, the Lord turned the same to good. For this is his goodnesse and mercy, that *matters ill begun, the Lord both can and will turne unto good*. Thus he did with *Rebecca* and *Jacobs* dissembling to get the blessing, and with the selling of *Joseph* by *Jacobs* sonnes his unnaturall brethren.<sup>120</sup> This example therefore of *Ruth* is not imitable. It giveth no warrant for mothers to teach their daughters to play the harlots, and to be bawdes to them;<sup>121</sup> nor to allow yong women to go to yong men, and to give their bodies to be abused, in hope of marriage; nor to make night-matches and meetings to procure husbands, whilst they hereby often make themselves whores, to their own shame, and grieve of friends.<sup>122</sup> *If it be not imitable, will some say, why is it recorded?* To answer this, we must know that the actions of the godly are of divers sorts:<sup>123</sup> either *extraordinarie*; as *Abrahams* offering *Isaac*; *Moses* his killing of the Egyptian; Israelites borrowing and carrying

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appearance of there deserved reproach.’ Lady Anne Halkett: Selected Self-Writings, ed. Suzanne Trill 74-5.

<sup>119</sup> Bernard finally comes to the objection which would have been of great concern to him – that Ruth could have sinned. The early modern commentators all note the susceptibility of biblical figures to fleshly sin in their expositions of Ruth 3.14. Here, Bernard may be making a counterargument to Topsell’s defence of Naomi’s advice on the grounds that Boaz was old and not given to being lewd but rather pious, and Ruth was virtuous (Topsell 170). Bernard’s view distils Lavater’s pronouncements, regarding Naomi’s advice, on a man and a woman being alone at night, the connection between drunkenness and sexual disinhibition in biblical instances and in Ovid (Lavater 92v-93r), and Naomi’s endangering Ruth with whoredom (Lavater 95v).

<sup>120</sup> Here, Bernard develops Lavater’s point that the happy outcome was due to God’s mercy (Lavater 95r). In Bernard’s rendering, the emphasis is on the fact that the outcome was good, whereas Lavater only concedes this.

<sup>121</sup> Here, Bernard echoes Topsell’s ‘play the whoore’ (Topsell 169) and Lavater’s claim that Naomi used the arts of a bawd (Lavater 95r).

<sup>122</sup> This derives from Lavater (95v-96r). The two commentators show their fear that Ruth’s example might encourage women to compromise themselves in trying to secure marriage.

<sup>123</sup> In going on to classify Ruth’s example, Bernard draws on the classification made by Lavater (Lavater 93r-95r) and the association of Ruth’s example with that of Rebecca regarding Jacob’s blessing which he himself made earlier (RR 267), which is found in Topsell (Topsell 170-1). He does so in such a way as to make a new reading of his own. See the Introduction section 6.3.

away the goods of the Egyptians;<sup>124</sup> *Phinees* killing *Zimri* and *Cozbi*;<sup>125</sup> *Ehud*, *Eglon* King of Moab,<sup>126</sup> and such like: these are not for imitation, but to shew, that God can dispence with his Law, and is not tied to ordinary courses.<sup>127</sup> Or *ordinarie*, and this is manifold, First, good and allowed of God, as *Abrahams* teaching his houshold,<sup>128</sup> *Jobs* patience, praying for his children, and works [p. 268] of mercy and justice; *Cornelius* devotion;<sup>129</sup> *Pauls* labour in the ministry, and a thousand such like, left written for instruction to acknowledge the strength of grace, and are for our godly imitation.<sup>130</sup> Secondly, bad and unlawfull, as *Aarons* consenting to the Israelites idolatrie,<sup>131</sup> *Lots* incest, *Davids* adulterie and murther; *Peters* perjurie, and such like: these are not to be imitated, but to be avoided as evill, and are written to make us to behold mans corruption, and so his desert, that thereby we may set our selves to bewaile the same, to watch over our selves <Heb. 3.12-13>, and that none may boast of their owne righteousness, but acknowledge it Gods mercy, that wee are not confounded, and that it is his meere goodnesse that saveth us.<sup>132</sup> Thirdly, mixt, partly good and partly bad: so was *Rebecca* her seeking the blessing for *Jacob*, which God had promised; and here *Naomi* a marriage for *Ruth*, but the manner in both faultie. These are written to let us see our imperfections in doing a good thing, and to teach us to examine the wayes of the best, to know how farre they be imitable.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> See Exod. 12.35-6.

<sup>125</sup> See Num. 25.

<sup>126</sup> See Judg. 3.12-26.

<sup>127</sup> Extraordinary actions correspond to Lavater's singular deeds (94v).

<sup>128</sup> See Gen. 18.19.

<sup>129</sup> See Acts 10.

<sup>130</sup> Ordinary good actions correspond to Lavater's deeds which are to be imitated (93r-93v).

<sup>131</sup> See Exod. 32.1-6.

<sup>132</sup> Ordinary bad, unlawful actions correspond to Lavater's wicked deeds (93v-94r). This is the category in which Lavater places the deeds of Naomi and Ruth (94v-95r). Bernard's divergence from Lavater here is noted in the Introduction section 6.3, as is his omission of Lavater's category of deeds, notably levirate marriage, which were acceptable in the Old Testament, but would be wicked in his own time (94r-94v).

<sup>133</sup> Ordinary mixed actions, partly good and partly bad, notably including Naomi's seeking marriage for Ruth, is a category which does not occur in Lavater. Bernard follows Topsell in more specifically

Fourthly, meerey indifferent in themselves, neither commanded nor forbidden, as *Samson* his feasting of the yong men at his marriage;<sup>134</sup>  *Davids* delight and playing upon the harpe,<sup>135</sup> and such like: which are written to shew our libertie in things indifferent, and that we may use the same, so we be moderate therein.<sup>136</sup> Thus wee see the difference of actions, and why [r]ecorded. And these are we to marke, and examine, that wee be not mistaken, [p. 269\*] whether extraordinarie, or ordinarie, whether good, or bad, or mixt, or indifferent, and even in these, how lawfull to us, how expedient also, that we may not give offence.<sup>137</sup>

Verse 5. *And shee said unto her, All that thou sayest unto mee, I will doe.*

*Ruths* readinesse to obey her mother in law, and that in all things without exception.

*And shee said unto her.*] In this conference betweene them two here, is no interrupting of one another: *Ruth* heareth *Naomi* her counsell, and answereth when shee hath heard it; which commendeth her modestie and wisdom; for it *is folly to answer a matter, before it be heard.*

*All that thou sayest unto me, I will doe.*] *Ruth* is as ready to obey, as the other to command: and that in respect, first, of her reverence towards *Naomi*, and perswasion of her good mind towards her: for *whom we thinke well of and reverence,*

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associating *Naomi's* plan with another instance of a woman's advice which was not criminal but which was censurable, *Rebecca's* seeking a blessing for *Jacob* ([Topsell](#) 170-1). See the Introduction section 6.3.

<sup>134</sup> See *Judg.* 14.10.

<sup>135</sup> See 1 *Sam.* 16.18, 23.

<sup>136</sup> Ordinary indifferent actions is a category which does not occur in *Lavater*. See the Introduction section 6.3.

<sup>137</sup> Here, *Bernard* introduces the concepts of offence and expediency, which he treats in his exposition of *Ruth* 3.14 (321-2). It would appear that he sees these as offering guidance on imitability in the last two categories of his classification.

*their counsell we easily embrace, and willingly obey:* and yet herein may we doe amisse, if we examine not well the matter; for counsell may be sometime from error of the judgement, and sometime from corrupt affection.<sup>138</sup> Secondly, of her owne inclination to the thing, being young, and poore, to get a rich husband: for wee readily obey in that whereto wee incline our mind of our owne accord, there needeth little incitation.<sup>139</sup>

[p. 270] Verse 6. *And shee went downe unto the floore, and did according to all that her mother in law bade her.*

*Ruth's* performance of her promise, both in going downe to the floore, and in doing there, what her mother advised her.

*And shee went downe unto the floore.*] The Citie was then higher from whence shee went, though wee may reade of a floore up on high, 2 Sam. 24.18. It may seeme strange how *Ruth* durst attempt this, being a stranger, and fearefull by nature,

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<sup>138</sup> In saying that we (and, implicitly, *Ruth*) may do amiss to obey without proper consideration, Bernard expresses a similar opinion to Lavater. Lavater observes that children should not obey their parents' advice if it is unlawful, as Jesus (Matt. 10.37) and the example of Jonathan 1 Sam. [19] teach. He recognises that *Ruth* may have done wrong in ignorance, but observes that ignorance, like good intent in the case of Tamar (Gen. 38), is not an adequate excuse (*Lavater* 97r-98r).

The medieval Christian commentator Hugh of St. Cher cites Jerome's observation that *Ruth* is one of the four sinful women in Christ's genealogy (Matt. 1) (*MET* 41). This observation implies *Ruth's* culpability. It contrasts with the view of the later medieval Christian commentator Nicholas of Lyra that *Ruth's* ignorance did in fact entirely exonerate her (*MET* 61).

Topsell evidently changed his mind on the subject. In his 1596 edition he does not question whether *Ruth* should have obeyed Naomi, but in a passage added in the 1613 edition, placed under the lemma in verse 7, '*He went to lie downe*', he condemns the course of action which Naomi and *Ruth* took (*Topsell*, 1613 ed. 191-2).

Josephus, the Targum and the medieval Jewish commentators show little interest in whether *Ruth* should have obeyed Naomi's advice. Salmon ben Yeroham only comments that *Ruth* accepted Naomi's words as she always had (*BJE* 73). Rashi claims that *Ruth* did not exactly obey Naomi's instructions for her adornment for fear of being thought a harlot should anyone meet her (*BJE* 107), but he does not address the question of whether she should have obeyed Naomi in going to Boaz.

<sup>139</sup> This sceptical comment implies a criticism of Topsell's commendation of *Ruth* for depending on her godly parent when contemplating marriage (*Topsell* 171).

as women be: yet see, *where desire is, there nothing can hinder, or amate*<sup>140</sup> *the spirit, or daunt the heart.*

*And did according to all that her mother in law bade her.]* As it is in verses 3, and 4 so shee very exactly followed her mothers advice, and in nothing followed her owne mind,<sup>141</sup> lest perhaps, if things had not fallen out well, shee might have had the fault put upon her selfe. Here is *an example of strict obedience unto Parents, which is required at the hands of children.* Ruth doth according to all that which shee was bidden to doe. And thus in all lawfull things should children doe to parents; for so God would have it, it pleaseth him <Col. 3.20; Eph. 6.2>. It is the duety of children, and in so doing they shall be blessed <Col. 3.20; Eph. 6.1, 3>. Let children learne obedience to Parents, as *Isaac* obeyed *Abraham* <Gen. 22.6>; *Jephtes* daughter her father <Judg. 11.36-7>, and as our blessed Saviour did his Parents <Luke 1.51<sup>142</sup>>: which they will doe, if they feare God, Lev. 19.3, and hold their parents worthy of honour, as God commandeth <Exod. 20<sup>143</sup>>.

[p. 271] Verse 7. *And when Boaz had eaten and drunken, and his heart was merry, he went to lye downe at the end of the heape of corne: and shee came softly, and uncovered his feet, and laid her downe.*

This verse sheweth how shee did as her mother bade her, both for the time when, and the manner how.

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<sup>140</sup> 'amate': 'To dismay, daunt, dishearten, cast down.' (OEDO).

<sup>141</sup> Here, Bernard differs from the medieval Jewish commentator, Rashi, who claims that Ruth disobeyed Naomi in that she did not adorn herself until after she went to the threshing floor because she feared being met on the way and being thought a harlot (BJE 107). This claim indicates Rashi's unease with Naomi's instructions and suggests greater independence in Ruth.

<sup>142</sup> The correct reference is Luke 2.51.

<sup>143</sup> Specifically, verse 12.

*And when Boaz had eaten and drunke;]* meaning largely and freely, as the words following intimate, which it may seeme they used at such times as this. Wee may note, that *it is lawfull to eate and drinke more largely at one time than at another*;<sup>144</sup> as in times of feasting, which the Israelites kept in old time, in reaping the fruits of the Earth, as here; so at sheep-shearing they feasted <2 Sam. 13;<sup>145</sup> 1 Sam. 25>, at the weaning of children, as we at christ'nings <Gen. 21<sup>146</sup>>, at solemne times of rejoicing <Neh. 8<sup>147</sup>>, at mariages <Gen. 29.22; Judg. 14.10; Matt. 22.2;<sup>148</sup> John 2<sup>149</sup>>, at such times as God bestowed blessings and speciall favours <1 Kings 3.15>, or did graciously deliver his people <Esth. 9<sup>150</sup>>; at the intertainment of friends, and loving meetings of brethren and kindred <Gen. 26.30 and 43.34; Job 1<sup>151</sup>>; at such times and upon such occasions may we eate and drinke, and rejoyce our hearts. But yet with these *Caveats*: First, to take heed of excesse, by falling either into gluttony or drunkennesse, or wanton songs, or wanton behaviour, or by foolish jesting and mocking of the godly, as the Philistims did *Samson* <Judg. 16.25>. Secondly, to keep such feasting seasonably, not in time of Gods judgements, nor in the time of the affliction of the Church; for then [p. 272\*] it befitteth us rather to fast then to feast <Isa. 22.13-15;<sup>152</sup> Amos 6.6<sup>153</sup>>. Thirdly, that wee behave our selves Christian-

<sup>144</sup> The significance of this statement is made explicit by Lavater. In his exposition of Boaz's eating and drinking, he comments that certain Anabaptists and hypocrites condemn pleasures which are permitted (98v).

<sup>145</sup> Specifically, verses 23-9.

<sup>146</sup> Specifically, verse 8.

<sup>147</sup> Specifically, verses 12, 18.

<sup>148</sup> Verses 3-4 are also relevant.

<sup>149</sup> Specifically, verses 1-10.

<sup>150</sup> Specifically, verses 17-22.

<sup>151</sup> Specifically, verses 4, 13, 18.

<sup>152</sup> The correct reference is Isa. 22.12-14.

<sup>153</sup> Bernard uses this biblical reference differently from Topsell. Topsell cites Amos 6.5, 6 to argue that these verses, together with verses 3 and 4, indicate that Amos condemns singing and mirth at the meal table. Topsell observes that this practice is too common in England. He objects to food and music at the same time because they both cause mirth (178-9). Bernard is perhaps reluctant to insist on such plainness for his wealthy readers. He has other messages to direct which may seem to him to be more important, such as the need to follow a calling. Here, he merely points out that at times

like.<sup>154</sup> First, to praise and blesse the Lord and glorifie him <1 Cor. 10.31>: And here is worth the remembrance, the behaviour of the ancient Christians in their feastings together <*Tertullian, Apology, chapter 36*<sup>155</sup>>: they sate not downe before thanksgiving, they ate and dranke moderately, so as they would not hinder their devotion to God afterwards; their communication such, as they that knew they spake in the Lords hearing: when they had sufficed themselves, they provoked one another to speake somewhat out of the Scripture, or otherwise good things to the praise of God; by which was triall made how much every one had drunke; and finally they ended their meeting with prayer; this was a religious and Christian feasting. Secondly, in all our myrth to remember, and not forget, as *David* saith, Jerusalem, the Church of God <Ps. 137.5-6; Neh. 8.11>. Thirdly, to remember the poore which want: wee must not bee *Nabal*-like, to feast like a King, and bee without mercy to *David* and his company needing our reliefe; nor as the rich *Dives*, faring diliciously, and suffering the poore to perish at our gates. These *caveats* observed, wee may eate and bee merry.

*And his heart was merry.] Eating and drinking make the heart merry* <Ps. 104.14-15>. Thus were *Josephs* brethren made merry <Gen. 43.34>; for the spirits of men hereby are refreshed, and let loose, as it were, from cares <Prov. 31.6-7>; and this benefit we may have by the Lords creatures, and praise God for the same, so wee keepe [p. 273] a moderation, and use sobrietie, as *Boaz* here, and not become as

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fasting rather than feasting is called for.

<sup>154</sup> The following explanation develops Topsell's urging of the importance of being persuaded that we feed in God's presence, having Christ at temporal and worldly meals (*Topsell* 176). Topsell here is concerned specifically with eating and drinking in moderation, and so receiving a blessing, but Bernard, following Tertullian, enlarges on the subject of meals as an occasion for communal worship.

<sup>155</sup> The correct reference is chapter 39, describing the discipline of Christians and their ways of living. At their 'love feasts', 'only so much is eaten as satisfies hunger; only so much drunk as meets the need of the modest' (Tertullian, *Apology* 181).



drunken sots, like *Nabal*.<sup>156</sup>

*Hee went to lye downe at the end of the heape of corne.*] After his labour and repast, he went to take his rest, not in any dainty bedding, but even in the floore, at the end of the heape: and this did hee for the safetie of Gods blessings, and the better keeping of the corne winnowed, from pilfering. Note hence, I. That *painefull labour maketh man not curious*<sup>157</sup> *of his lodging*. *Boaz* here can lye hard; *Jacob* a Princes sonne, brought up daintily at his mothers lap, can take a stone and lay it under his head for a pillow, and sleep soundly, being wearied with travell, which maketh rest and hard lodging very pleasant to him: and howsoever *Jacob* might lye better before, yet did he never rest more blessedly than in this hard bed: for now the Lord spake to him, and he saw Gods Angels ascending and descending upon him:<sup>158</sup> for it falleth out, the more the body is pampered, the lesse spirituall comfort; and the lesse the body is c[he]rished, the more is the soule made glad, and the nigher wee be to God. Would we therefore not be nice,<sup>159</sup> nor curious of our lying. Let us labour our bodies till we be wearie, and we shall take hard lodging without dislike; hunger maketh poore fare sweet; so doth labour make hard lying pleasant. II. That *it is good*

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<sup>156</sup> In reiterating the need not to feast excessively (see also p. 271, 272), Bernard follows both Lavater and Topsell. Lavater observes that the Scripture often condemns luxurious drunkenness (98r). Topsell, towards the outset of his exposition of verse 7, notes God's blessing on his creatures which are moderately taken (174). He draws attention to the consequences of immoderate consumption which are stated in Prov. 23.29 and condemns those who do not eat so as to be blessed. The avoidance of gluttony, Topsell points out, has beneficial results. Topsell associates feasting in his own time with idle songs, vain jesting, untruths and ungodly books (Topsell 175) Bernard, rather than attributing these results to everyone, warns that wanton songs and foolish jesting should be avoided, being consequences of excess (271). He does not suggest the prevalence of drunkenness and gluttony as Topsell does.

Bernard differs from Lavater (98v) and Topsell (176-7) in not drawing attention to the desirability of labouring before eating. In doing so, he focuses on the subject at hand, feasting, having discussed the importance of labouring earlier in the commentary, as he does in his exposition of the next lemma.

<sup>157</sup> 'curious': 'Careful as to the standard of excellence; difficult to satisfy; particular; nice, fastidious. *Obs.* a. esp. in food, clothing, matters of taste.' (OEDO).

<sup>158</sup> See Gen. 28.10-15.

<sup>159</sup> 'nice': 'Fastidious, fussy, difficult to please, esp. with regard to food or cleanliness; of refined or dainty tastes.' (OEDO).

*husbandrie to seeke to save, as well as to get* <Prov. 27.23>. *Boaz* was noble, wise, rich, and also thriving, yet mercifull, and therefore not base, but yet would, as need required, see to his owne estate and Gods blessings bestowed [p. 274] upon him, that they might not be diminished by purloining hands. This honest care of this great man, and good man too, checketh such spendthrifts, as doe waste Gods blessings; they bee theeves to themselves, and such as depend upon them; they worke their owne overthrow and destruction, and in adversitie they shall be without comfort: for their consciences will tell them, that they have justly brought upon themselves that evill.<sup>160</sup>

*And she came softly and uncovered his feet, and laid her downe.*] A great shew of evil: for she went to a wrong man,<sup>161</sup> it was also in the night, and alone, to him alone, and after his feasting too; a too bold adventure, upon her mothers weake advice in this manner of doing. True it is, the successe was good; but this more of Gods mercy, then the fact deserved. *Boaz* also commended her, verse 10, but it was not for thus comming, not for the manner, but for the thing intended, to wit, to match with him, shee following the rule of the Word, and not lust to seeke to young men, whether poore or rich. Here we see what *Naomi* contrived, she did with as much cunning,<sup>162</sup> as care, act it; for it is said, shee came softly, secretly, and without any stirre or noise to awake him, and so laid her down at his feet, waiting when he should of his owne accord awake. *We warily act a thing, where wee be loth to offend*; and there are wee contented to waite patiently, where we feare to doe amisse, as *Ruth*

<sup>160</sup> Bernard's following of Lavater's view that Boaz was minding his goods (*Lavater* 99r) allows him to launch into a characteristic attack on spendthrifts.

<sup>161</sup> Although Bernard has already pointed out that Ruth went in error to Boaz since he was not the next kinsman (266), here it is evident, from the other observations he makes in this sentence, that he is not only concerned with the correct observance of the law, but with the sexual immorality of Ruth's conduct. She showed evil in approaching in inappropriate circumstances a man who did not have the first claim to marry her.

<sup>162</sup> 'cunning': 'Knowledge how to do a thing; ability, skill, expertness, dexterity, cleverness.' (*OEDO*).

doth here.<sup>163</sup> This wisdom can we shew in attaining our desires in things of the [p. 275] world; Oh that we thus could behave our selves towards God! and that we might say with the Prophet, *My soule doth waite for the Lord, and in his Word doe I hope*, Ps. 131.5-6.<sup>164</sup>

Verse 8. *And it came to passe at mid-night, that the man was afraid, and turned himselfe; and behold, a woman lay at his feet.*

The event of *Ruths* thus secretly comming in, and lying at *Boaz* feete unawares to him. Where note the time when; the event it selfe; the effect of it; and the occasion of both in the last words.

*And it came to passe at mid-night.*] Thus long *Boaz* slept after his labour and paines-taking, before hee did awake. Note, that *the wearied body and quiet mind sleepes soundly*: (so *Salomon* telleth us <Eccles. 5.12>) eate he little or much. If therefore we would soundly sleepe, being in bodily health, let us labour our bodies; wearinesse is the best physicke to cast any one asleepe: the idle cannot sleepe, they be troubled with dreames, and foolish fantasies: Wee must also get a quiet spirit, so shall we sleepe without feare: and this is to bee gotten, first, by seeking reconciliation with God in Christ, so may we lye downe in peace with *David*, and not bee afraid <Ps. 4.8 and 3.5; Job 11.14, 19<sup>165</sup>>: this made *Peter* sleepe soundly in

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<sup>163</sup> Bernard attributes to Ruth an awareness that her actions may be wrong. Thus, in this passage, he is expressing his views on Ruth's obedience to Naomi with a similar emphasis to that in his exposition of verse 5. In commenting on the subject here in the story, where Ruth goes to lie near Boaz, he may be following Topsell's 1613 edition. Topsell's consideration of the culpability of Naomi and Ruth in an added passage in this edition appears to be misplaced under the lemma in verse 7, '*He went to lie downe*' (1613 ed. 191-2). It would appear to belong under the next lemma, '*And Ruth came*' (1613 ed. 192).

<sup>164</sup> The correct reference is Ps. 130.5-6.

<sup>165</sup> The correct reference is Job 11. 15, 19.

great bodily danger <Acts 12<sup>166</sup>>; and the Martyrs, some of them, the night before they went to execution. Secondly, by shaking off the cares of the world, which maketh the worldling that hee can- [p. 276] not rest <Eccles. 5.12>. Thirdly, by suffering no evill to reigne in our hearts, as envie, malice, lust, covetousnesse: for these things will not suffer us to take rest <Prov. 4.16>. Fourthly, to keepe ever a good conscience towards God and man; this is a continuall feast, and giveth us rest.

*That the man was afraid.*] *The best are subject to feare, upon conceit of perill, and that suddenly:* So was *Gideon* afraid,<sup>167</sup> and the Apostles on a sudden,<sup>168</sup> and likewise *Boaz* here, and that upon these reasons: First, his naturall frailtie and weakenesse of faith, which also is in every one. Secondly, his ignorance, not knowing what it was, because she came in unknowne to him, when he was asleepe: and in such cases we be more apt to conceit evill towards us, then good, because our hearts tell us, that wee bee wicked by nature, and deserve evill. Thirdly, the darke and dead time of the night, which is to man fearefull: the Psalmist speaketh of the terror of the night <Ps. 91.5>. We all by experience know, how easily mans heart is made fearefull in the darke; except in the sonnes of *Belial*, and the children of the kingdome of darkenesse, hardned in evill, and which make the night the time of their lewde practices; yet even these also will soone bee stricken into sudden feare. Fourthly, this feare may more suddenly possesse one in the night, as here it did *Boaz* being alone: for that Spirits have taken at such times bodily shapes upon them, and shewed themselves: for the night is their time chiefly, as may be seene in their comming then most commonly to Witches, knowne [p. 277] by their owne

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<sup>166</sup> Specifically, verse 6.

<sup>167</sup> See Judg. 6.22-3.

<sup>168</sup> See, for example, Mark 10.32; Luke 8.25.

confession.<sup>169</sup> Let us therefore hence take notice of this weakenesse, which so sheweth it selfe from the love we beare to our bodies safetie, and naturall life. Now, if wee feare so much for this cause bodily dangers, Oh how much more should we feare to commit sinne, and the wrath of God for sinne, which bring destruction to body and soule, without timely repentance!

*And turned himselfe.]* Hee gathered himselfe together shrinking, as the manner is of such as in bed being in sleepe, fall into a sudden feare, and turne to and fro; such a forcible operation hath this feare upon the whole body, for to decline from, and avoid the danger conceived, nature seeking to save it selfe, in apprehension of perill, and that of a sudden.<sup>170</sup> This naturall feare is more quicke and sudden to seaze upon the heart, then the spirituall feare to avoide sinne, or the displeasure of God, and so the danger of the ruine of our soules: for this danger is not so soone apprehended; here is required the grace of illumination, and of faith, before this can bee wrought in us.

*And behold, a woman lay at his feet.]* The feare possessed him without cause. And thus it falleth out often, *Man often feareth without just cause*: the godly through the weakenesse of their faith, reprooved by Christ <Matt. 8.26>: the wicked by their accusing conscience, which maketh them to flie, when none pursue them <Prov. 28.1>; they thinke that evill doth haunt them, and perill soundeth in their eares <Job

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<sup>169</sup> Bernard corroborates Lavater's suggestion, probably derived from Nicholas of Lyra ([MET](#) 61), that Boaz may have thought an evil spirit which had taken on a body lay at his feet ([Lavater](#) 99v) from his own beliefs about witches. Bernard treats the subject of witches in [A Guide to Grand-Jury Men](#) (1627). For contemporary beliefs about witchcraft see James Sharpe, [Witchcraft in Early Modern England](#).

<sup>170</sup> Bernard does not mention physical contact between Boaz and Ruth. In this he differs from Topsell (174) and Lavater (99v), Nicholas of Lyra ([MET](#) 61) and the medieval Jewish commentator Rashi ([BJE](#) 107). Rashi's interpretation would have confirmed the worst fears of the early modern commentators, for he claims that Boaz, thinking it was a demon, wanted to cry out and Ruth seized him and embraced him. By not mentioning physical contact, Bernard follows the biblical account more exactly, and therefore is not inclined to exaggerate his criticism of the women beyond what he finds grounds for in the Bible.

15.21>. Therefore let the godly labour for strength of [p. 278] faith, and the wicked repent, and seeke for the peace of a good conscience, that they need not to feare.

Verse 9. *And he said, Who art thou? And shee answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid; spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid, for thou art a neere kinsman.*

This is *Boaz* his questioning with *Ruth*, her answer, with a request to him, and the reason thereof.

*And he said, Who art thou?]* *Boaz* comming to himselfe, moderateth his feare, and containeth himself from unchaste touching, and demandeth what she was. Wee may note, first, that *though feare possesse wise and godly men upon a sudden, yet they moderate it, and are not wholly overcome therewith*: for *Boaz* heere cryeth not out to servants for helpe, neither speaketh to her, as one amazed,<sup>171</sup> neither falleth he into a rage with her, that shee should be occasion of such feare: for howsoever the feare suddenly seized upon him being fast in sleepe before, yet was it not childish, nor womanish, he soone shooke it off, as a man of courage, having confidence in God. He mastered his naturall feare: and so should wee, and not bee overswayed therewith, as women and children be. Secondly, *That raging lust should not seaze suddenly upon honest hearts, and such as feare God*. *Boaz* was with her alone, yet doth he not in a filthy affection seeke to dishonest<sup>172</sup> her, as *Judah* did *Thamar*, [p. 279] being inflamed with lust at the sight of her; he did it on the day time, he asked not what shee was, as *Boaz* doth here, lust would not affoord him that leasure.<sup>173</sup>

<sup>171</sup> 'amazed': 'Struck with sudden terror; terror-stricken, terrified, alarmed.' (OEDO).

<sup>172</sup> 'dishonest': 'To violate the honour or chastity of; to defile.' (OEDO).

<sup>173</sup> See Gen. 38. The implicit comparison between Ruth and Tamar indicates that Bernard finds

This continencie is praise-worthy in old *Boaz*, as it was before in young *Joseph* <Gen. 39<sup>174</sup>>: a vertue as in these commended, so commanded by God, and much praised in some Heathen, who may rise up in judgement against our wanton Youth, and some lecherous old men, whom God doth hate.

*And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid.*] Thus *Ruth* calleth her selfe, shewing her humility, as before in chapter 2.13 and here, by professing what a one shee would be unto him, humble and serviceable, as an handmaiden, if shee might obtaine her sute.<sup>175</sup> So said *Abigail*, when *David* sent to her, to take her to wife <2 Sam. 25.41<sup>176</sup>>; and so humble and serviceable was *Sarah*: for shee called *Abraham* Lord <Gen. 18.6<sup>177</sup>>, and in what he commanded, she readily obeyed. And so should good and vertuous wives doe still, when husbands command but what is honest and just: not that wives should be counted in condition as servants: for as that is more then they will grant, so is it more then husbands of right ought to expect from them that be their yoke-fellowes: but what maid-servants and handmaidens doe of feare, and servile dutie, wives should do of love with chearefulnes such offices, as they ought to performe unto their husbands, who have authoritie to command. Therefore let wives learne to obey, as God commandeth them to doe in all things,<sup>178</sup> and that with reverence, as [p. 280] unto the Lord, and as it is fit in the Lord, as the Apostle

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Ruth's conduct seriously improper. See his comment in expounding chapter 4 verse 12, p.431. He is also, of course, commending Boaz's continence.

<sup>174</sup> Specifically, verses 7-20 which tell the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife. Bernard's use of this reference again implies an unfavourable comparison with Ruth, this time with Potiphar's importuning wife. Furthermore, he goes on to suggest that many men in his own society would, like Judah, take advantage of such a situation.

<sup>175</sup> In finding in Ruth evidence of wifely obedience and humility in his exposition of this lemma, Bernard seems to be attempting to balance his unease with her conduct in approaching Boaz with these conventionally exemplary characteristics. See the Introduction section 6.3.

<sup>176</sup> The correct reference is 1 Sam. 25.41.

<sup>177</sup> The correct reference is Gen. 18.12.

<sup>178</sup> Bernard ends his exhortation with an emphatic insistence on subordination despite his initial recognition that husbands should only be obeyed in their commands that are honest and just.

teacheth <Eph. 5.22, 33; Col. 3.18>. And doubtlesse there would be more such, then we find in these dayes, if they might have *Abrahams* to their husbands, loving, wise in instructing them, and giving them honour as the weaker vessels. Note farther, how this worthy woman doth humble and debase her selfe: for *the Godly think lowly and meanelly of themselves*; as did *Abigail*,<sup>179</sup> also *David* <1 Sam. 24.14>, that worthy Centurion, who said, That hee was not worthy that Christ should come under his roofe.<sup>180</sup> *Abraham* likewise did call himselfe dust and ashes <Gen. 18<sup>181</sup>>; Saint *Paul* did greatly humble and vilifie himselfe <1 Tim. 1.13; 1 Cor. 15.9>: for the godly are not selfe-loving, they see and know what they be by nature; they are not like the Angel of the Church of Laodicea, which thought highly of himselfe, and that he wanted nothing, when yet he was poore, and blind, and naked, and miserable <Rev. 3<sup>182</sup>>. They know, if they have any thing, that the same is from God, that the more they have, whether gifts of body, or mind, or of the world, or the graces of the soule spirituall and heavenly, the more they be indebted, and the more they are to answer for. These things considered, make them lowly in their owne eies, and to behave themselves so unto others, as all that feare God ought to doe, and should goe one before another in giving of honour; and not in taking it, as the world now doth.<sup>183</sup>

*Spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid.*] In this phrase of speech shee modestly claimeth marriage of him: for some do write, that it was a [p. 281] custom when they were contracted, that the man did throw over the woman, the lap or wing of his garment, in token that he took her into his protection.<sup>184</sup> The word is taken

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<sup>179</sup> See 1 Sam. 25.24.

<sup>180</sup> See Matt. 8.8.

<sup>181</sup> Specifically, verse 27.

<sup>182</sup> Specifically, verse 17.

<sup>183</sup> Bernard's emphasis that the privileged should be piously humble reinforces his expression of the opinion that the wealthy should labour in a calling.

<sup>184</sup> For the tradition in commentaries on the Book of Ruth of reporting this custom, see the Introduction section 6.3.



from Fowles, which cover under their wings their yong from danger. By which, *husbands* are to learne, that they *either are, or should be a protection to their wives* <Gen. 20.16>; for the woman bestoweth her selfe upon the man, forsaking for his love, father and mother, to bee under his covert as his wife; she is then as himselfe, and he is to love her as being become one flesh; and as the head, he is to care for her as well as to rule and governe her. And therefore let husbands shew themselves to be such: and this shal they do, if they doe give their wives countenance, and do grace them with all their credit; if they upon all just occasions stand for them, defend their persons, honestie and credit<sup>185</sup> against others; if they love, cherish, and nourish them, as their owne bodies, affoording them all honest contentment, then are they good protectors. And if husbands be the wives protection, and that they looke to have them so, let them depend upon their husbands, let them keepe close to them, and by a loving obedience procure protection thus from them:<sup>186</sup> from which some husbands are so farre, as some wish them dead, and so in heart are murtherers; some expose them to all miserie by their unthriftinesse; some runne from them, and leave them to the wide world; some offer them, or at least bawd-like, are willing to have them give their bodies unto the lusts of others, that they [p. 282] may live thereby; others there bee which murther them, to bee rid of them. All these are false and faithlesse husbands, breaking promise to their wives made to them before God and his Church, cursed caitifes, running headlong to destruction, without honesty, love, or naturall kindnesse to their owne posteritie.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> 'credit': 'The attribute of being generally believed or credited; the quality or reputation of being worthy of belief or trust; trustworthiness, credibility (of persons, statements, etc.).' (OEDO). Bernard returns to the subject of credit on pp. 334-5.

<sup>186</sup> Again, Bernard employs the strategy of claiming a benefit for an individual when they adopt a behaviour he wishes to encourage.

<sup>187</sup> Again, Bernard engages in a diatribe against bad husbands (see p. 13).

*For thou art a neere kinsman.*] Here is the reason of her request grounded upon Gods Law, as she had learned by her mother in law <Deut. 25<sup>188</sup>>. This is her onely reason which she useth to *Boaz*, for that he was a good and a godly man, with whom the strongest argument to prevaile, is the Word of God: for *the Word hath authoritie in godly mens hearts*; it bindeth their consciences, and forceth them to yeeld, it commandeth them more, then all other reasons besides. And therefore in having to doe with such, gather arguments soundly from the Word of God; for these will worke upon good mens hearts, and in using such reasons aright, the Lord, and not man, may bee said to speake unto them: which course, though worldlings mocke at, yet such as feare the Lord, will weigh and consider of, for that they doe desire to square and frame their whole life after the Word and Law of God.<sup>189</sup>

[p. 283] Verse 10. *And hee said, Blessed be thou of the Lord, my daughter: for thou hast shewed more kindnesse in the latter end, then at the beginning, in as much as thou followest not young men, whether poore or rich.*

*Boaz* his reply unto *Ruth*, when hee knew who shee was; wherein hee blesseth her, commendeth her, and giveth the reason of such his commendation of her.

*And hee said.*] His answer is full of kindnesse and love, neither doth he reprove her any thing at all, though hee justly might for her thus comming in this manner: but *Boaz* being a good man, considered rather the lawfulnessse of the matter which she came for, then of the manner of seeking it: then also her ground, and the reason moving her to come to him, which was the Law of God. Thirdly, the

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<sup>188</sup> Specifically, verses 5-10.

<sup>189</sup> Bernard gives considerable weight to the levirate law as the justification of *Ruth*'s request to the godly *Boaz*.

estimation of her person, being held a vertuous woman generally of all. And lastly, his fulnesse of charitie, which taketh things in the best part, and is not easily offended, made him not to reprove her: For *a good man full of mercy and love, doth not lightly condemne the vertuous for some shewes of evill*, for missing in the manner, where the matter intended is good. For here the matter was lawfull, the ground and inducement just, the person honest and generally well spoken of, and her intendement<sup>190</sup> not ill. When these things concurre, we are not to take exceptions against the manner, or failing in some [p. 284] light circumstance. Herein let us imitate good and godly *Boaz*: and let us not bee like such rigide Censurors, as those bee which condemne the best things, if they bee not every way as they ought. Those also which make a small fault a great offence; rejecting the whole matter for the manner; the person for a little mistake. Oh how would a proud and churlish *Nabal* have taken up this poore woman, a widdow and a stranger, if shee had come to him for marriage, especially if shee had mistaken him, as *Ruth* here did *Boaz* in some sort! What shame, what impudency would he have laid upon her, and so have rejected her? And those likewise which take things indifferent in ill part, as *Hanun* the King of the Ammonites did  *Davids* Ambassadors <2 Sam. 10<sup>191</sup>>, which is greatly against charity <1 Cor. 13<sup>192</sup>>, and an argument of an envious, malicious and proud nature, as may be seene in  *Davids* brethren against him, misinterpreting his comming, being sent by his Father to them <1 Sam. 17.17-18, 28>.

*Blessed bee thou of the Lord.*] These words shew how well hee tooke her comming and request made touching marriage; hee scorneth her not, hee putteth her

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<sup>190</sup> ‘intendment’: ‘The act or fact of intending; will, purpose, intent; that which is intended, an intention; a design, project.’ (OEDO).

<sup>191</sup> Specifically, verses 1-5.

<sup>192</sup> Specifically, verses 4-7.

not off, but accepts her, as appeareth afterwards, and even in these words, when hee saith to so poore a woman relieved by his Almes, *Blessed be thou of the Lord.*] Which words may bee taken either as a petition, or as an affirmation. If as a petition, that the Lord would blesse her, then are the lessons the same with those in Chapter 2.20 where the same words are used by *Naomi* for him, as hee doth here for *Ruth*: [p. 285] excepting this circumstance, that there *Naomi* a poore woman prayeth for the rich, and here the rich prayeth for the poore; of which also before in Chapter 2.12.<sup>193</sup> If, as an affirmation of that which he judged her to be: as if he had said, *Blessed art thou of the Lord*: thou art an happy and blessed woman, as in Luke 1.28, for in Hebrew the word *be*, or *art* is not expressed, but onely thus, *Blessed thou of the Lord*, and so may be understood either *be*, to make it a petition; or *art*, to make it an affirmation:<sup>194</sup> and then wee learne, That *the godly, though poore, yet are blessed* <Luke 1.28 with 11.28>, and so accounted of *Boaz*, that is, of a godly man, who can judge of true blessednesse: for the godly have those things wherein true blessednesse consisteth: As first, Gods favour in Christ, and through him are the Children of his Father, therefore called blessed <Matt. 25<sup>195</sup>>. Secondly, they have the fruits of the Spirit, and the practice of vertue, and for this they bee pronounced blessed <Ps. 119.1-2 and 128.1>. Thirdly, they have the pardon of sinne, and their sinnes put away in Christ, and shall not be imputed to them, and therefore are blessed <Ps. 32.1-2>. Fourthly, they have the assurance of eternall life, which is promised onely to such, and cannot be taken from them <John 10.27-8>; and therefore most blessed, though they want these outward things, as their Master Jesus Christ himselfe did, whilst hee lived heere on Earth. Let this comfort the godly poore, and make them to

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<sup>193</sup> See pp. 180, 181-2.

<sup>194</sup> Bernard here makes a typical application of his knowledge of Hebrew (see also p. 186).

<sup>195</sup> Specifically, verse 34.

rejoyce more in their godlinesse, then the worldlings in their earthly treasure; the carnall man in his pleasure; or the vaine glorious in his honour. This should [p. 286] make men esteeme of the godly, as *David* did <Ps. 101<sup>196</sup>>, and as *Abimelech* did of *Isaac* <Gen. 26.28>: also to endeavour to be like them, if we account them blessed, and to esteem their reproach for righteousnesse sake, to bee more honour, then the glory of *Pharaos* court, as *Moses* did <Heb. 11<sup>197</sup>>; to have them to dwell with us, to have our delight in them, as *David* had in the Saints, for they are blessed <Ps. 101<sup>198</sup>>. And if so, then this confuteth the carnall conceit of worldlings, who thinke not so of them, especially if poore: yet let such consider our Master Christ how poore hee was; also the afflicted state of the Saints mentioned in Heb. 13.37<sup>199</sup> yet pronounced to bee such as the world was not worthy of. And lastly, how *Joseph* a Prince in Egypt, did rather choose to put his sonnes into *Jacobs* family, and to bee called his children, than into *Pharaos* court, to bee accounted mightie among the Egyptians.<sup>200</sup>

*My daughter.*] See Chapter 2.8. Thus he might call her, as beeing old: for *the ancient are to be as Fathers, and old women as Mothers unto the yonger sort*, in teaching them good things by word and by example <Tit. 2.1-3<sup>201</sup>>. So as a Magistrate hee might so speake to her, as *Josuah* spake to *Achan* <Josh. 7<sup>202</sup>>; for magistrates are to be as Fathers to the people, and to tender<sup>203</sup> them as their children: but of this before.<sup>204</sup> Note how she called her selfe his handmaid, but he is pleased to

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<sup>196</sup> Specifically, verse 6.

<sup>197</sup> Specifically, verse 26.

<sup>198</sup> Specifically, verse 6.

<sup>199</sup> The correct reference is Heb. 11.38.

<sup>200</sup> See Gen. 48.

<sup>201</sup> Verses 4 and 5 are also relevant.

<sup>202</sup> Specifically, verse 19.

<sup>203</sup> 'tender': 'To feel or act tenderly towards; to regard or treat with tenderness: with various shades of meaning.' (OEDQ).

<sup>204</sup> See pp. 160, 161. Bernard returns to the subject on p. 292.

tearme her by the name of daughter, though shee so had debased and humbled her selfe. For *the humbling of our selves maketh our esteeme to be nothing lesse, but rather greater, with [p. 287] such as be godly and wise*; see Chapter 2.10-12, where the more *Ruth* did humble her selfe, the more account did *Boaz* make of her: for such as humble themselves, shall bee exalted.<sup>205</sup> Let none then thinke by humbling themselves, that they shall lose credit and honour, as foolishly the base borne, and new start-up<sup>206</sup> doth imagine: for they cannot but be suspicious of contempt, who know themselves unworthy of honour and esteeme.<sup>207</sup>

*For thou hast shewed more kindnesse in the latter end, then at the beginning.]*

This is the reason of his blessing of her, or accounting of her blessed, because shee encreased and did not decay in goodnesse. *The truely vertuous and heartily religious are better at last than at the first.* As the Angel of the Church of Thyatira,<sup>208</sup> and as it is said of *Ruth* here in her kindnesse and love:<sup>209</sup> for goodnesse, grace, and vertue where it is truely planted, will increase rather then decay: for the Lord husbands such Trees, by his Word, his Spirit, and afflictions <John 15.2>. Wee must therefore labour for this commendation, if wee will be held truely vertuous, truely honest, kind, just, mercifull, and gracious <1 Thess. 4.1>: but some are farre from this praise, growing worse and worse, till they be starke naught, whether it be in respect of Religion, as we see in *Jehu*,<sup>210</sup> *Demas*,<sup>211</sup> *Alexander* the Copper-smith,<sup>212</sup> and *Judas*, who were worst at last, because they were never truely good at the first: or in respect

<sup>205</sup> Bernard is again employing his strategy of claiming that the conduct he is encouraging has beneficial effects for those adopting it.

<sup>206</sup> 'start-up': 'An upstart; a low-born person who has risen to wealth or power.' (*OEDO*).

<sup>207</sup> This seems to be an indication of the increasing social mobility characteristic of the period.

<sup>208</sup> See Rev. 2.18-19.

<sup>209</sup> Bernard seizes on Boaz's perception of Ruth's increasing kindness to identify her with this church praised in Revelation and hold them both up as exemplary.

<sup>210</sup> See 2 Kings 10.29-31.

<sup>211</sup> See 2 Tim. 4.10.

<sup>212</sup> See 2 Tim. 4.14-15.

of love and kindnesse, as here spoken of *Ruth*, which love some turne into hatred, and kindnesse into [p. 288] cankred malice, and shew more ill will at the last, then love at the first; like *Amon* to his sister *Tamar*,<sup>213</sup> and *Saul* to *David*: for that love was neither good nor sound in them, as *Jonathans* was to *David*, and *Ruths* to *Naomi*, and hers to *Ruth* againe.

*In as much as thou followest not young men, whether poore or rich.] Boaz* in the other words gave a reason of his blessing of her; here he giveth a reason of his so commending her kindnesse: which appeareth to bee more at the last now, than at the first, to wit, to her husband deceased, and to her now mother in law *Naomi*, because shee married him in her owne countrey, and him rather then any of her owne nation, which was kindnesse; then, for *Naomi* her sake to leave her owne countrey, and to come and dwell with her in Judah in a poore estate; this was great kindnesse: but now to be ruled by *Naomi*, beeing so yong a woman, to seeke to match with an old man, and not to follow nature, in desiring yong men; but the Law of God, for to raise up a name againe unto her dead husband, whom by this meanes shee maketh to live againe in Israel; this is it which maketh her kindnesse to bee more at last then at the first, in loving an old man rather than any yong, and him also for the dead sake, to revive his name among the people of God. See here in *Ruth*, how *true love, obedience to good counsell, and grace, doe overcome nature, and the law of lust*: for shee loved her husband, shee was obedient to *Naomi*, and in her selfe vertuous, and there- [p. 289] fore reason and Religion did take place, and neither nature, nor lust prevailed with her. A good example for youth to follow. Note out of these words farther these lessons: First, that *as now, so then, and ever before, there have beene two sorts, rich and poore in the world*. First, to shew in one, what all might have

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<sup>213</sup> See 2 Sam. 13.

beene; and in the other the poore, what all deserve to bee. Secondly, that the rich may have occasion to shew workes of mercy, and the poore labouring painefully and honestly, may have to whom to goe unto for reliefe: for the rich are Gods Stewards for the poore. Let both seeke to live together lovingly, and to helpe one another; the poore, to lend their labour to the rich, and the rich to supply their wants; for the one cannot live without the other: all cannot bee rich, neither must all bee poore. Let us rest contented with our estates; let not the poore murmur with envy at the rich; neither let these despise the poore: for God hath made them both, and one to stand in need of the other.<sup>214</sup> Secondly, that *yong persons in nature affect to marry with yong persons like themselves*; which is implied by *Boaz* speech. So did *Isaac* marry, and *Jacob*; and so in ancient time were matches made. If ever old and young married together, it was the old man with a young woman, but never an old woman with a young man, as the wanton and lecherous often doe with wanton young fellowes in these dayes, to the staine of their sexe, and reproach to themselves, and often their utter [p. 290] undoing. For youth cannot affect old age, and therefore it is fittest that marriage bee made betweene such as may most likely agree together; other matches prove for the most part untoward. Thirdly, *The truly religious will be ruled by the Law of God, and will not be led after their naturall disposition*. For here *Ruth* leaveth the young men, and taketh an old man, because the Law so bound her, as she conceived, taking *Boaz* for the nearest Kinsman: because such as be truly religious, have denied themselves, and doe resigne themselves wholly to Gods good pleasure and will, saying as Christ said, *Not my will, O Father, but thy will bee done* <Matt. 26.39>. Hence was it that *Joseph* did abstaine from his Mistresse; *David* from

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<sup>214</sup> Bernard's depiction of a symbiotic relationship between the rich and poor stresses the importance of hierarchy and reiterates his views on charity set out in detail in chapter 2, that the rich have a responsibility to the poor, and that the poor must labour for their relief.



smiting *Saul*, when twice he might have done it, to get the kingdom;<sup>215</sup> he rather would waite, and endure much affliction; for he that beleeveth, saith *Isaiah*, maketh not haste.<sup>216</sup> And hence is it, that such as feare God, dare not follow the course of the world, but doe restraints their nature, and their desires, and do endeavor to please God in all things. If this be the grace of the religious, let men hereby trie themselves, and bee as God wisheth them to bee <Deut. 5.29>, and as Religion and Grace it selfe requireth them to be, as *David* promised and prayed to be <Ps. 86.11 and 119.5; Jas. 1.27; Tit. 2.11-12>. They are surely then far from being religious, which live according to their lusts; those that will follow the world with *Demas*, and *Judas*, and *Nabal*; but not forsake it, as *Barnabas* <Acts 4.37>, and *Zacheus* did <Luke 19<sup>217</sup>>; those that wil follow the flesh, as the young men did their eyes in the old world <Gen. 6<sup>218</sup>>, and as *Potiphars* wife, who was inamoured with [p. 291] faire *Joseph*; few *Josephs* among the vainely and idly up-bred Youths of the Gentry in our dayes. And yet such will hunt after honours, and vaine titles; and if they cannot merit them, they wil pay money for them: the insolencie and pride of *Haman*, the aspiring arrogancie of *Absalom* and *Adoniah*, are reigning in many. And have we not Scribes and Pharises which love the highest places? Is there a *Jonathan* among thousands? Where is a *Moses*, that wil be no more a Courtier for feare of sinning <Heb. 11<sup>219</sup>>? Will a *Saul* become a *Paul*, so well trained up? Or can there be found a *Manaen*, a Princes foster brother, to joyne to the Church, and to become a Teacher, in meere love to Religion <Acts 13.1>? Do they not rather scorne the Calling? And yet to call these worldlings, these fleshly livers, and these vaine-glorious spirits, prophane,

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<sup>215</sup> See 1 Sam. 24 and 26.

<sup>216</sup> See Isa. 28.16.

<sup>217</sup> Specifically, verses 1-10.

<sup>218</sup> Specifically, verse 2.

<sup>219</sup> Specifically, verses 24-5.

irreligious, lovers of pleasures more then lovers of God, Oh how would they take on! How enraged would they be! so they love to be held religious, or not to be without Religion; and yet in works deny God, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate, as the Apostle speaketh <Tit. 1.16>.<sup>220</sup>

Verse 11. *And now, my daughter, feare not, I will doe to thee all thou requirest: for all the Citie of my people doth know, that thou art a vertuous woman.*

*Boaz* gave her before due commendation, here is now his consolation, and comforting of her, first, by a dehoration,<sup>221</sup> willing her not to feare, then by a faithfull promise to satisfie her request, yeelding a reason of the same.

[p. 292] *And now, my daughter.*] *Boaz* still useth this terme, both for that he loved her, and desired to comfort her. We may here see in *Boaz*, that *a loving and mercifull heart is not rough in tearmes*; as an unloving and mercilesse *Nabal* is. This we may see to bee so betweene loving Parents and children, in *Abraham* and *Isaac* <Gen. 22.7-8>; betweene kind married couples, as in *Isaac* and *Rebecca*,<sup>222</sup> *Elkanah* and *Hannah* <1 Sam. 1.8>; and betweene loving friends, and godly disposed, as in *Elizabeth* and *Marie* <Luke 1.43<sup>223</sup>>, *S. Paul* and other Christians, or Labourers with him in the Gospell, and also in *Eli* and *Samuel* <1 Sam. 3.16>: for loving natures, whether they bee high and honourable, speaking to meane persons, as *Boaz* to *Ruth* heere; or old and in authoritie, to such as bee young, as *Eli* to *Samuel*; or such as sit

<sup>220</sup> This vehement attack is evidence of the puritans' alienation from the dominant classes in Jacobean and Caroline society.

<sup>221</sup> 'dehortation': 'The action of dehorting *from* a course; earnest dissuasion.' 'dehort': 'To use exhortation to dissuade (a person) from a course or purpose; to advise or counsel against (an action, etc.).' (OEDO).

<sup>222</sup> In Gen. 26.8 we are told that Isaac was 'sporting with' Rebecca (AV). This implies a loving relationship.

<sup>223</sup> Verse 42 is also relevant.

in judgement, speaking to Malefactors, as *Joshua* to *Achan* <Josh. 7.19>,<sup>224</sup> or a Master unto his servants, as *Job* to his <Job 31.13>; or one giving an almes to the poore, as *Boaz* to *Ruth* <Chapter 2.8>: it is all one, they are not rough nor churlish; for they be neither proud nor impatient. And therefore, if we would be held loving and mercifull, let us use loving and kind speeches. Note againe, that *loving and kind speeches of great and rich persons, are comfortable unto the poore*, as *Ruth* before confesseth <Chapter 2.13>; and therefore *Boaz* doth heere use them, to cheere up the spirit of this poore woman: for kind words witnesse a kind heart, if the speakers be not dissemblers. Now, the apprehension of hearty love in the mighty, gladdeth much the heart of such as be poore, and in a low estate. Let therfore the mighty and rich learne to shew [p. 293] forth kindnesse, and to speake lovingly. By it *David* so speaking to *Amasa*, passing by his fault with *Absalom*,<sup>225</sup> bowed the heart of the Tribe of *Judah*, as one man <2 Sam. 19.13-14>. How did *Absalom* win the hearts of the people? was it not by loving speeches, and courteous behaviour, which bee of an attractive vertue to gaine mens affections?<sup>226</sup> How singularly beloved was our late Queene *Elizabeth* of most blessed memorie, for this vertue, of all her true subjects, in that she was so affable, and full of loving speeches, and of a gracious carriage towards them?<sup>227</sup> The contrary wee may see in *Rehoboam*, who by rough and contemptible speeches alienated the hearts of ten Tribes from him for ever.<sup>228</sup> The mightie therefore shall doe wisely to speake with mildnesse, to use termes of love

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<sup>224</sup> This example, used also on pp. 160, 161, 286, and 356, may seem inappropriate, as Achan was stoned after confessing to Joshua (Josh. 7.25). However, Bernard explains his meaning on p. 356. Joshua did not execute justice in an overbearing manner.

<sup>225</sup> Amasa was made by Absalom the captain of his host (2 Sam. 17.25), and was thus involved in his rebellion.

<sup>226</sup> See 2 Sam. 15.2-6.

<sup>227</sup> The role of the many panegyrics on Elizabeth in reinforcing the legitimacy of her rule is considered by Penry Williams in *The Later Tudors. England 1547-1603* 424-432.

<sup>228</sup> See 1 Kings 12.

and respect; whereby they shall procure love, reputation and due honour unto themselves.<sup>229</sup>

*Feare not.*] That is, feare not to bee deceived of thy hope: though thou be poore, and I rich, let no such thought trouble thee, that I should therefore make light account of thee: for I am well disposed in my affection to thee; therfore feare not: thus *Boaz* speaketh unto *Ruth*. For he knew, and so doe we, that *it is a common thing to feare the issue, where earnest desire is to obtaine the thing*; especially where it may in some respects seeme unlikely to come to passe, as *Ruth* might here so conceive, when shee should consider what they two were, and the great difference betweene them. For in such a case there cannot be a full perswasion of the event; the poorer and meaner party [p. 294] may justly feare contempt, and usually such a one feareth the alterabilitie of mans nature, though hapely good words may passe betweene them for the present. And therefore in such a case it is good and fitting for the partie, of whom kindnes is expected, to give to the other some tokens of assurance, not to doubt, nor feare, as *Boaz* doth in this place, and in the words following.<sup>230</sup>

*I will doe thee all that thou requirest.* By this *Boaz* taketh away her feare and doubt, in that he promiseth her marriage. For, *where a godly and honest man maketh a promise, there is no feare of performance*; because hee maketh conscience of his word, and knoweth himselfe in equitie bound to the performance of the same. And therefore may wee rest upon an honest mans word, though in these dayes many

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<sup>229</sup> This discussion of loving speech, developing the earlier discussions on pp. 138 and 160-1, especially emphasises Bernard's characteristic argument that the behaviour he is encouraging, here loving speech, brings benefit to those practising it.

<sup>230</sup> Bernard follows Topsell in suggesting that Boaz might well have been scornful of Ruth (Topsell 188) – evidence of the hierarchical assumptions prevailing in the seventeenth century (see the Introduction section 3).

would bee held honest, which make no conscience of breach of promise.<sup>231</sup> In that *Boaz* here maketh her a promise of marriage, and so contracteth himself unto her, but yet *de futuro*,<sup>232</sup> as it is said, and conditionally, as the two next verses shew, we may note, that *it is lawfull to betroth and contract our selves one to another before marriage* <Exod. 21.9;<sup>233</sup> Deut. 20.7; Matt. 1.18>. It was an usuall thing among Gods people in former times; which betrothing is either lawfull or unlawfull: lawfull, which is made by parties that may lawfully marry, which be free in their choise, of yeeres of disc[r]etion to make their choise: and therefore contracts made of such as bee within degrees forbidden, of contrary religions, betrothed already to others, or defective in nature, or wanting judgement what they doe, or being un- [p. 295] der government of Parents and not free, are not to bee allowed. Now further, this lawfull contracting is either conditionall, or absolute, and the same *de praesenti*, or *de futuro*<sup>234</sup>, I take thee, or I will take thee to be my wife. If conditionall, then it bindeth no farther then the observing of the condition bindeth; for if that be not kept, the parties bee free, unlesse they give their bodies in the meane space one to another. If it bee absolutely made, and by such as may so contract themselves, they be man and wife before God, and may not be sundred one from another. These things are to be therfore considered of in contracts, used before marriage, for the parties better settling of their affections one upon another, for the better acquainting themselves with the conditions and qualities of each other, and to fit themselves for house-keeping, and more convenient living together, having made some honest provision before-hand.<sup>235</sup>

<sup>231</sup> Bernard expands these observations in his discussion of credit, pp. 334-5.

<sup>232</sup> ‘concerning the future’.

<sup>233</sup> Verse 8 is also relevant.

<sup>234</sup> ‘concerning the present or concerning the future’.

<sup>235</sup> Bernard may have been impelled to define contracts of marriage because, in the early modern

*For all the citie of my people doth know, that thou art a vertuous woman.*] The reason why hee yeeldeth to take her to wife: her portion was her vertues, for which she was generally commended of all. This reason did the more confirme her, and easily removed away feare, when she might perceive upon what ground he was induced to marrie with her. Hence may arise many lessons: first, that *vertue maketh even the poore and strangers too to become famous*, as may appeare in this poore widdow a Moabitesse woman. So it made *David* famous in the dayes of *Saul*, though hee sought to [p. 296] obscure his name;<sup>236</sup> and likewise *Barnabas* in the Primitive Church;<sup>237</sup> for vertue will not bee hid, neither can it. And therefore such as desire renowne, labour for vertue. Is not *Abigail* famous for her wisdom? *Joseph* for his chastitie? *Moses* for his meekenesse? *Samuel* for his justice? *David* for his zeale? *Ehud*, *Gideon*, and *Jephthe* for their fortitude, and so the seven and thirtie Worthies of *David* for their valiant acts?<sup>238</sup> *Ester* for her humility? the sinfull woman for her penitencie?<sup>239</sup> the sonnes of *Jonadab* the son of *Rechab* for their temperance?<sup>240</sup> This is the way, and the best way to get fame and true honour for ever; and yet few tread aright in this path, but rather they will make themselves so notorious by villany, that all may know them to be vicious persons, without shame, without blushing, like those which *Esai* and *Jeremy* speake of, which would not hide their sins, neither bee ashamed for them <Isa. 3.9; Jer. 6.15>. Secondly, that *the godly and vertuous will take notice of such as bee vertuous among them*: for so doe here all the people of Bethlehem, the people of God; because they love vertue, having it in themselves,

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period, these contracts were the grounds of litigation. See Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers* 139-179.

<sup>236</sup> See 1 Sam. 21.11-15.

<sup>237</sup> See Acts 11.24.

<sup>238</sup> See 2 Sam. 23.8-39.

<sup>239</sup> See Matt. 26.7-13, Mark 14.3-9, Luke 7.36-50, John 12.3-8.

<sup>240</sup> See Jer. 35.

they desire to encourage others that be so, and rejoyce therein, and therefore doe they speake thereof, and spread abroad the name of it, to make the parties which be vertuous, to be honoured. This is comfort to such as live well, though they doe not, nor may thereby seeke praises, yet shall they be taken notice of. And by this may men consider of themselves whether they be vertuous, if they will take notice of graces in others, and re- [p. 297] joycingly speak thereof, to the honour and praise of the vertuous. Thirdly, that *a godly man will take a wife for her vertues*, as *Boaz* doth here *Ruth*; so did *David* for her vertues chuse *Abigail*: for a vertuous woman is lovely, and her price, as *Salomon* saith, is farre above the Rubies: the heart of her husband may safely trust in her, so that hee shall have no need of spoile <Prov. 31.10-11>. Let men therefore in marrying make this choise; for such a woman is a crowne to her husband, and she retaineth honour <Prov. 12.4 and 11.16>. And yet this is the least reckoned of in these dayes: but now beauty, wealth, honour and friends, are the motives to make marriages. Fourthly, that *a good report for vertue in a woman, is a good portion, and a meanes of preferment*.<sup>241</sup> Thus came poore *Ruth* to so honourable and rich an husband, having neither wealth, nor friends. For such a woman hath the best and most durable helpe of true love, even vertue; she hath the Lord to speake for her, and to procure her favour, and to cause her to bee beloved. This should make women to strive for vertue, and to get a good name from it, and not for beautie and brave attyre: for a good name is better then riches, then precious oyntment, and rather to bee chosen then great riches <Eccles. 7.1; Prov. 22.1>. Let Parents hence learne to bring up their daughters vertuously, it is a good portion and meanes of preferment. This may comfort poore maidens which bee vertuous, and

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<sup>241</sup> Bernard characteristically claims that the characteristics of virtue which he goes on to enumerate bring a benefit to women exhibiting them – they enable them to match well.

want friends and goods, by a good report yet may they match well; let them strive therefore, though they want goods, yet to get grace [p. 298] and good conditions, as pietie and Religion in heart; and modestie in countenance, apparell, and gesture; let them preserve chastitie, and not bee given to youthfull company; let them bee skilfull in good huswifrie, painfull<sup>242</sup> also and industrious, and having power to governe the tongue; if thus they be beautified and enriched, they have a better portion then many pounds, and faire enough to the wise in heart, so as they will give a good man contentment: for beauty is fading, and favour deceitfull and vaine, but a woman that feareth the Lord, shall be praised <Prov. 31.30>.

Verse 12. *And now it is true, that I am thy neere kinsman: howbeit, there is a kinsman neerer then I.*

*Boaz* his information of *Ruth*, wherein shee was somewhat mistaken, granting the truth that he was a neere kinsman, but not the nearest: so as here he preventeth her apprehension of the promise made, for taking it absolutely, but conditionally, as in the next verse more at large hee declareth his mind. So that heere is a concession of that which she had spoken of him in verse 9 and withall an instruction touching another neerer then himselfe, which she knew not of.

*And now it is true.*] *Boaz* will not deny a truth, for a godly man is a lover of the truth, and will yeeld to it, when hee heareth it: for it swayeth with him, which if it so did with every one, it would prevent tedious disputes and contentions among the [p. 299] Learned; prevent long suites of law; put Lawyers to silence in corrupt pleading, and save many pounds contentiously misspent, prevent deceit in buying and selling,

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<sup>242</sup> 'painful': 'painstaking, assiduous, diligent.' (OEDO).



and many other mischiefes, which miserably fall out for want of acknowledging the truth, which men should and would doe, if they hated falshood and lying, if they had a hearty love of the truth, if they would cast off pride and the desire of vaine praises, and covetousnesse, and the greedy desire of gaine; for these hinder the truth; and where these reigne, hardly will truth bee acknowledged as it ought, or reigne among men as it should.<sup>243</sup>

*That I am thy neere kinsman.*] Foure things might move him thus ingen[u]ously<sup>244</sup> to confesse himselfe so nigh a kinsman to those poore women. First, his love to the truth, so to speake as the thing was. Secondly, his holy and religious respect unto the Law of God, by authority whereof shee made claime to him. Thirdly, his humility and uprightness of heart, not disdainning his godly poore kindred. Fourthly, her owne vertues, and his love which he bare to her for the same. (Of rich and poore kinsfolks I have spoken before in Chapter 2.20.<sup>245</sup>) Here observe, that *a loving, godly, humble, and upright-hearted rich man will readily confesse himselfe of neere kindred to his poore kinsfolke, if they be vertuous*: for vertue maketh them honourable with the vertuous, though povertie make them contemptible to the world. And therefore for the poore to get an acknowledgement of them from their rich [p. 300] kindred, let them be vertuous, that whereas they want goods, grace may procure them favour and respect: for poore and lewd are not worthy the acknowledging, being contemptible both in body and soule.<sup>246</sup>

*Howbeit there is a kinsman neerer than I.*] So that *the nighest to a right, are*

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<sup>243</sup> In this discussion, Bernard develops his discussion on pp. 157-9, in particular, in drawing attention to social benefits for his own society which would result from speaking the truth in the manner he perceives this to be done in the Book of Ruth.

<sup>244</sup> 'ingenuously': 'In an ingenuous manner; honestly, straightforwardly, openly, frankly, candidly; without dissimulation or reserve.' (OEDO).

<sup>245</sup> See pp. 231-3.

<sup>246</sup> Bernard emphasises his view that the poor must be deserving if they are to be assisted.

*first to be preferred thereto*: this is here implied; and this reason and equitie will yeeld. Therefore *Boaz* honestly maketh heere mention of this other kinsman, to whom *Ruth* should first have gone: for both *Naomi* and shee were mistaken in this, to come first to *Boaz* for the right of marrying her: yet see how courteously and lovingly hee answereth her, teaching, that *such as demand in simple ignorance a matter at our hands as due, and yet in some sort not so, wee are meekely to informe them, and not scornefully to reject them*, as great Ones now will doe: for a simple errour is pardonable, and it is a fruit of goodnesse to informe them in the right: and this would prevent contention and strife, which otherwise might grow thereupon for want of better information. Let this then reprove those which gladly take occasion from such mistakes, to laugh at and jest away the parties, making themselves very merry with the parties simplicitie, though their meaning be both good and honest.<sup>247</sup>

[p. 301\*] Verse 13. *Tarry this night, and it shall be in the morning, that if hee will performe unto thee the part of a kinsman, well, let him doe the kinsmans part: but if hee will not doe the part of a kinsman to thee, then will I doe the part of a kinsman to thee, as the Lord liveth: lie downe untill the morning.*

*Boaz* his confirmation of his promise before, concerning his marrying of *Ruth*: wherein is noted the time when hee will goe about it, upon what condition hee will doe it, the confirmation it selfe by solemne oath, and his advice to rest for that night till the morning.

*Tarry this night.*] *Boaz* deferreth to performe the kinsmans part for a space,

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<sup>247</sup> Here, as elsewhere, Bernard demonstrates the high value he places on respect being shown to all classes in society, provided they are honest and religious.

though very short: and seeing it was night and now dangerous for her to goe alone from thence, hee adviseth her to tarry there that night in the floore. Note first, that *upon reasonable cause, that may bee deferred, which cannot absolutely be denied to be done*. Which may bee of use to checke the impatient of delay, when there may be good reason and just cause of delaying the matter. Secondly, that *a true and loving friend careth for the safety of such as he loveth*. Thus *Lot* tooke care for his guests;<sup>248</sup> *Michol* for  *Davids* escaping from the hand of *Saul*.<sup>249</sup> so *Jonathan* in this respect shewed his care and love to *David*, and *Hushai* his friend likewise.<sup>250</sup> So did the Disciple care for *Pauls* safetie <Acts 9<sup>251</sup>>: for true love is not onely to doe favours, but to expell injuries, and to prevent dangers from friends. Which repro- [p. 302] veth the ill friendship of men in these daies; for some will see their friends running into evill, yet will not care by good counsell to prevent it, much lesse being in trouble to seeke their deliverance, if it should haply prove either troublesome or costly: for neither of these will these counterfeit friends bestow upon those they pretend to love, when they stand in need of them. Some are worse, even *Judas*-like, who for gaine will betray their friend; or play *Achitophels* part, turne his counsel against him for hope of favour, when he thinkes his friend downe the wind, and another like to arise:<sup>252</sup> such false and faithlesse hearts may now be found more than enow,<sup>253</sup> who also will expose their friend into any danger or losse, so they may get or save thereby. Let men therefore learne soundly to try, before they too hastily trust the pretended, rather then truely intended love in these dayes: for now is falsehood in

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<sup>248</sup> See Gen. 19.1-10.

<sup>249</sup> See 1 Sam. 19.11-17.

<sup>250</sup> Hushai, 'David's friend' (2 Sam. 15.37) helped to defeat the conspiracy of Absalom. See 2 Sam. chapters 16-18.

<sup>251</sup> Specifically, verse 25. The actual word is 'disciples', in the plural.

<sup>252</sup> Ahithophel had been an esteemed counsellor of David, but sided with Absalom when he thought he would gain power. See 2 Sam. 16.23.

<sup>253</sup> 'enow': 'enough' (OEDQ).

friendship, for that commonly every man loveth another for himselfe onely, as experience sheweth: for otherwise true friends will be as *Jonathan*, who valued nothing of a Kingdome for his friend  *Davids* sake;<sup>254</sup> they will be like *Hushai* in advising for  *Davids* welfare; as *Barzillai* in relieving him in distresse, and in shewing him kindnesse when most were against him,<sup>255</sup> as *Abishai* in exposing himselfe into imminent danger for his safetie.<sup>256</sup> What friends can be found like the Heathen Mariners to *Jonah*, who in a tempest strove with all their powers to save him, with danger of all their lives? or like the Nurse of *Mauricius* [p. 303] the Emperours child, who offered her owne to be slaine by that bloudie *Phocas*, to preserve her foster childs life, the sonne of the Emperour?<sup>257</sup> Rare examples worthy imitation, but not to be paralleled in these dayes. But to returne to *Boaz*, it may be asked, *Why he would suffer her to be within alone in the floore all night?* I answer, his care of her safetie: for hee would rather admit of an inconvenience to himselfe, then the danger of a mischief to her, knowing the wickednesse of the times then. Againe, it may be, he felt in himselfe strength by Gods grace, and also a resolution to withstand the temptation, because he was a man of yeeres (though yet some old are wanton enough:) because he was a just man (as it is said of *Joseph*, the husband of *Mary* <Matt. 1<sup>258</sup>>) and would preserve right to his neighbour. And thirdly, for that he had an honest and true intent to marry her, if so hee might, and therefore hee would not offer her dishonesty; though many of unbridled affections make such oportunities,

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<sup>254</sup> See 1 Sam. 23.17-18.

<sup>255</sup> See 2 Sam. 19.32.

<sup>256</sup> See 2 Sam. 21.15-17.

<sup>257</sup> The Byzantine Emperor Maurice was overthrown by Phocas, who killed Maurice himself and his five children in A.D. 602. The nurse of the youngest child tried to save his life by substituting a child of her own, but did not succeed. Bernard probably found this story in a reprint of Book 8 of the *History* of Theophylact Simocotta published in Ingolstadt in 1604. See Theophylact Simocotta, *The History of Theophylact Simocotta* 227.

<sup>258</sup> Specifically, verse 19.

ready motives to themselves of abasing themselves one with another: because (forsooth) they mind to marry: Of which evill in this Booke elsewhere I have spoken <See Verse 14<sup>259</sup>>.<sup>260</sup>

*And it shall be in the morning.*] So *Boaz*, though hee deferred it, yet it was but a very little while; hee would not long, as *Naomi* saith after, delay the matter <Verse 18>: for *a wise man will not bee over-hastie, yet will hee not neglect, but hasten the businesse which hee taketh in hand*: For the one is the property of a foole, but the other of a man of understanding <Prov. 14.15>, if so be the matter doe require haste: for there be [p. 304\*] two extremes in businesses to be avoided: the one is too great haste, where need is not: and this is rashnesse, punished in good *Josias* <2 Chron. 35.22>, and in the heady Israelites <Num. 14.40>: the other is too great remisnesse and slackenesse, when the matter requireth haste, which was *Amasa* his fault <2 Sam. 20.5>. And therefore the matter is to be considered of, and thereby wee may judge when to make haste, and when to take more time and deliberation: for that is not rashly attempted, which is first undertaken with good advice, though with speed executed. Secondly, done seasonably, as the circumstances of the time, place, and persons require. Thirdly, when it is done by our calling warrantably. When a man faileth in these, though hee take time enough, hee is but a rash Adventurer.

*That if hee will performe to thee the part of a kinsman;*] That is, if hee will marry thee, and raise up the name of the dead: for he is before me by right to take or refuse thee; so as if he will have thee, thou canst not refuse him: then take him, and so an end hereof betweene us. Though it appeareth many wayes, that *Boaz* had an

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<sup>259</sup> See pp. 315-6.

<sup>260</sup> Having developed Lavater's and Topsell's noting of Boaz's consideration and kindness in keeping Ruth with him into a lesson on friendship for his own time (*Lavater* 105v-106r; *Topsell* 189), Bernard finally turns to consider the danger of unchastity which he sees in Ruth's overnight stay. However, this evidently causes him concern. See the Introduction section 6.3.

earnest affection to *Ruth*, yet would hee not wrong the kinsman, if hee would have her: for *a good and a just man, even in what hee desires, will not wrong another*: because the Law of righteousness bindeth him to just dealing, of which hee maketh conscience <Jer. 22.3>. So requireth the Law of love, which possesseth his heart, which is, to love another as himselfe, and to doe as he would be done unto <Matt. 22.37;<sup>261</sup> Matt. 7.12>. And thus should every man learne to doe, and not to [p. 305] withhold any good from the owner thereof, and to whom it is due <Prov. 3.27>. In this kind owe nothing to any man, neither wrong any: for *God is an Avenger of all such things* <1 Thess. 4.6>. Here then come justly to be reprov'd such as make no conscience of wronging others; of which sort are all these: First, Theeves and Robbers, against which the Prophet and Apostle speaketh <Zech. 5;<sup>262</sup> 1 Cor. 6.10>. Secondly, Partakers with such, by counsell, command, consent, provoking, flattery, concealing, receyving, defending, or (if it be in our power,) by not punishing such: for such be wicked persons, and such do hate their owne soules <Ps. 50.18>. Thirdly, fraudulent persons <1 Thess. 4.6; Lev. 19.13 and 25.27<sup>263</sup>>, of which there be these: first, such as pretend law, to doe wrong, as the Judge in giving wrong sentence for by-respects, who by the Prophet are called theeves <Isa. 1.23>. So Lawyers, in craftie pleading to overthrow justice and innocencie; the Sheriffes in panelling partiall Juries to pleasure men; and all such as be false witnesses, or procure their unjust cause to passe, by giving bribes.<sup>264</sup> To these may be added deceitfull buyers and sellers, in praising or dispraising overmuch for advantage <Prov. 20.14>, in counterfeit wares, in false weights and measures <Deut. 25.13,

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<sup>261</sup> Verses 38-40 are also relevant.

<sup>262</sup> Specifically, verse 3-4.

<sup>263</sup> The correct reference is Lev. 25.37.

<sup>264</sup> Bernard emphatically expresses his dissatisfaction with individuals involved in legal processes. See the Introduction section 3.

16>. So likewise those Villaines, counterfeit Bankrupts, damnable Theeves, Cony-Catchers,<sup>265</sup> cheating Gamesters, and Gnathonical<sup>266</sup> Knaves, who soothe and flatter, to gaine by others simplicity and folly. Fourthly and lastly, such as withhold goods from the owners, and will not make restitution, as in conscience they are bound: for so God commandeth and promiseth mercy to them that restore, and threatneth the [p. 306] punishment for not restoring <Lev. 6.1;<sup>267</sup> Ezek. 18.7, 12>. It is a Rule of equitie and justice that requireth it, which is, to give every one his owne; and the Law of nature, to doe as wee would be done unto. Yea, we have the practice of the godly to move us; the sonnes of *Jacob*: *Zacheus*, and *Samuel* offer it <Gen. 43.21; Luke 19.8; 1 Sam. 12.3>; If they had done wrong to any. Lastly, this is the judgement of the godly Learned, that restitution should be made, affirming the sinne not to be remitted, except the thing taken away be restored: and also that Repentance is not found without it, if there bee ability to restore <Saint Augustine in *Epistola ad Macedonium*,<sup>268</sup> *Danaeus*<sup>269</sup> in *Ethices Christianae, liber 2, caput 15*,<sup>270</sup> Perkins in *the practice of Repentance*.<sup>271</sup>>. Neither may this bee deferred, when it is in our hand <Prov. 3.28>, and when we come to worship before God <Matt. 5.23<sup>272</sup>>: But we must restore the thing found, borrowed, or otherwise gotten, and not justly beeing our owne <Lev. 6.5,<sup>273</sup> Josephus, *antiquitates, liber 4, caput 8*.<sup>274</sup>>, unto the true

<sup>265</sup> ‘cony-catcher’: ‘One who catches ‘conies’ or dupes; a cheat, sharper, swindler. (A term made famous by Greene in 1591, and in great vogue for 60 years after.)’ (OEDO). (See R. Greene, *A Notable Discovery of Coosenage* (1591)).

<sup>266</sup> ‘gnathonical’: ‘Resembling Gnatho or his proceedings; parasitical, toad-eating.’ ‘gnathos’: ‘A person resembling the Gnatho of Terence; a parasite, sycophant.’ (OEDO).

<sup>267</sup> Verses 2-7 are also relevant.

<sup>268</sup> See Aurelius Augustinus (St. Augustine), *Augustine: Political Writings* Letter 153, pp. 71-88.

<sup>269</sup> Lambert Daneau (in Latin, Lambertus Danaeus) was a French Protestant theologian, 1530-1595 (‘Daneau (Danaeus), Lambert (1530-1595)’).

<sup>270</sup> (1583) ff. 240r-263r.

<sup>271</sup> See William Perkins, *Two Treatises. I. Of the nature and practise of repentance* (1593) 61-2.

<sup>272</sup> Verse 24 is also relevant.

<sup>273</sup> Verse 4 is also relevant.

<sup>274</sup> Chapter 8 of Book 4 of Josephus’s *Antiquities of the Jews*, earlier cited by Bernard on p. 4, provides an account of the form of the political government which was established by Moses. This

owner himselfe, if we know him, or to his children, executors, or next kinsman; and if these bee not to bee found, then to God, for some publike use to the Church, or reliefe of the poore. And this restitution must bee made by mee for every wrong done to my brother, in body, either by my selfe, or by my beast; in his goods in like manner, by stealing, by eating their ground with my beasts, by burning, by borrowing and not repaying, by withholding what was delivered to be kept of fidelitie, by hiding cattell going astray, or keeping things found <Num. 5.7-8; Read Exod. 21.19, 29-30; Lev. 24.19; Exod. 21.33-4, 36 and 22.1; 2 Sam. 12.6; Deut. 22.2;<sup>275</sup> Exod. 22.5-6,14; Ps. 37.21; 2 Kings 6.5; Lev. 6.4; Deut. 22.2-3; Lev. 5.16> Herein also may justly be reckoned sacriledge, robbing of Churches, or Church-men of their maintenance allowed by God, and the good Lawes of our Land, by not tything, or tything deceitfully <Deut. 14.22; Prov. 20.25; Lev. 27.33; Mal. 1.8, 13-14>. The labourer is worthy of his [p. 307] hire:<sup>276</sup> let him enjoy such maintenance as by Law is given him, and godly Ancestours truely intended him; and bee not guiltie of this spirituall theft, which the very heathen would not doe to their priests: for in the great famine of Egypt all the Egyptians lands and goods were bought and sold, but the lands of the Priests were not, but they did eate the portion which *Pharaoh* gave them <Gen. 47.22>: but with us men are of so greedy and more then heathenish appetite, that they can devoure up both land, and living, and tything, the whole Portion of Christs Ministers; so as these heathen shall rise up in judgement against these devourers, which eate up from the Lords Messengers what hath bin dedicated for the maintenance of his Service and Worship.<sup>277</sup>

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includes restoring goods to their proper owners (*Josephus [Whiston]* 79, 80).

<sup>275</sup> As in the reference to this verse below in this list, verses 1-3 are all relevant.

<sup>276</sup> See Luke 10.7; 1 Tim. 5.18.

<sup>277</sup> Tithing was also a concern for *Topsell* (*Topsell* 129-30). Bernard's extended discussion of restitution enables him to give weight to this issue. He emphasises that tithes are an integral part of



*Well, Let him doe the kinsmans part.]* That is, I yeeld him his right in thee, because hee is before mee, as I have said, neither will I take thee, except hee renounce his right in thee. *Boaz*, we see, seeketh not to gaine her to himselfe without consent, neither will abuse her, but honestly behaveth himselfe in the night with her alone, as in the eyes of men, and open view of the world: for *a godly man is not good because of men, but for that he feareth God which looketh upon him, and upon whom hee looketh*: and therefore every where behaveth himselfe as hee ought. *Boaz* here loveth her, but lusts not after her to defile her, as some would, making it a sport to commit fornication, with those whom they thinke doe belong unto others, either betroathed maids, or married wives: but [p. 308] whoremongers and adulterers God will judge <Heb. 13.4>.

*But if hee will not doe the part of a kinsman to thee.]* These words *Boaz* uttereth as the ground of his promise to marry with *Ruth*, to wit, if hee the kinsman refuse her: for *when one renounceth his right, it is then free for another*: for the release made, is a setting free of that which before was tied, which is for direction to such as take houses, or grounds. It is a common complaint to say, He hath taken my house and my grounds from me: But often unjustly, as when the Lord letteth not lands or houses, but to a limited time, which being expired, the same is free to let to another, except either custome bind to let the present possessor to have the refusall, or that some promise be made, which bindeth an honest man to keepe it. Beside this, there is indeed a friendly courtesie in the Land-Lord to offer to the present Injoyer that which hee hath, before any other; but he is not simply bound so to doe, but only of good wil. Yet must I needs acknowledge, that it is not a neighbourly part for any

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the godly social order. There is a full account of the practice of tithing, and the questioning of its legitimacy, by Laura Brace in The Idea of Property in seventeenth-century England.

one out of a greedy covetousnesse, to under-myne the possessour, or by any indirect meanes to procure from him at the Land-Lords hands, his house or lands: for this is against the Law of love, to doe as wee would be done unto, and not to doe to others, what wee would not that they should doe unto us, as the Law and Prophets teach, and our Master Christ commandeth;<sup>278</sup> and yet this is a common practice now for want of love. Note againe how warie *Boaz* is in making her a promise to [p. 309] marry with her, it is done cautelously,<sup>279</sup> with condition of upright dealing betweene him and another. For, *as every promise is to be made of an honest man with due consideration*, (because once made, it bindeth, except there be a release) *so especially the promise of marrying one another*; both for the weightines of the matter (nothing being so much concerning the welfare, or downefall of man in this life) as also for the indissolublenesse of the knot; for here is no releasing one of another, but they must live together till death. And therefore let us learne to bee warie in making this match: and to doe this, first, consider these two things before mentioned, and weigh them well to prevent haste and rashnesse herein. Secondly, how fit or unfit the marriage is, and what good reasons there be to perswade to it, or dissuade from it. Thirdly, what is required before the marriage to further it, or else which might hinder the same. We may not rashly, and unadvisedly runne into this holy ordinance, as many doe, first, upon foolish, light, and unadvised love. Secondly, upon strong and unbridled lust, violently pressing them to sudden contracts, and often to filthy uncleannesse, like bruit beasts, which have no understanding. Thirdly, upon a feare to lose the opportunitie of enjoying one another, if friends should know it, therefore they will contract themselves, and give themselves one to another, and that

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<sup>278</sup> See Matt. 7.12.

<sup>279</sup> 'cautelously': 'Cautiously, warily, circumspectly.' (OEDQ).

dishonestly, to force friends to consent. Fourthly, covetousnesse, when men are carried away, not with the love of the partie, but with the greatnes [p. 310] of a portion. These, and such like, make hastie matches, at leasure to be repented of. Here it may be demanded, *Why Boaz made an (if) of the other Kinsmans mind and good will, seeing first he was the nighest Kinsman, and had secondly, the Law of God to moove him thereto; was it not uncharitableness?* I answer, No: for hee knew not his kinsmans mind, as it appeareth by his triall of him the next day. Againe, hee knew well, that albeit nature and Religion tie men to doe a thing; yet worldlings will not doe their dutie. *Cain* had Nature, Reason, and Religion, to love his brother *Abel*; so had *Saul* to respect *David*; but these prevailed with neither of them, no more then the Law here was of force to moove this worldling; for such a one he was, as shall be shewed in the next Chapter.

*Then will I doe the part of a Kinsman to thee.] Boaz* having laid downe the condition, he reneweth his promise made in verse 11, yea, though the other refuse her, he will take her: *for one mans dislike, maketh not true love to decay in another mans heart*: for true love is fixed upon the thing beloved, without respect to other mens affections to the same; their liking may the more increase love, but dislike cannot utterly remove it, where it is firmly settled: this, experience telleth us to bee true, in the love of young persons affecting marriage. And it were to bee wished, that our love were so strong, that our soules were so glued to Religion, that though others dislike, wee may not therefore cease to love it, but bee as *Ruth* to [p. 311] *Naomi*, and so say, as she to her, though shee saw *Orpha* depart from her <Chapter 1.16>. Note againe, that albeit *Boaz* made this promise to her alone, and without other witnesses, but God onely; yet having promised, and sworne to keepe it, he after

honestly and faithfully performs the same, as in the next Chapter is plaine: For, *an honest man will keepe his oath and his word*; as may be seene in the Reubenites, Gadites, and halfe Tribe of Manasseh <Num. 32.27; Josh. 4.12 and 22.3>, in *Jonathan and David*,<sup>280</sup> in *Judah with Simeon* <Judg. 1.3, 7, 12-13<sup>281</sup>>, in *Joseph* to his brethren after [*J*]acobs death <Gen. 50.21<sup>282</sup>>, *Caleb* to *Othniel*, the Spies to *Rahab* <Josh. 6.23>, and to the man of Bethel <Judg. 1.25>: for an honest man hath a binding conscience, when the word is passed out of his mouth, he careth for his honest name and credit, which to him is more then riches, and better then oyntment. If therefore we be of upright and honest dealing, and so would be accounted, let us keepe our words and our othes: for this is common honesty, justice, and a thing of good report, which we are commanded to have care of <Phil. 4.8>. It is a marke of a good Christian, though it bee to our owne hinderance <Ps. 15.4>; wee shall be like the children of our heavenly Father, who faileth not of any thing which he speaketh <Josh. 21.45; 1 Kings 8.56>. Without keeping promise, men cannot bee trusted; it cutteth off all commerce and traffique with men.<sup>283</sup> Godly men have ever made conscience of their word; and very heathen men have been worthy of admiration in this point. And yet these things moove nothing a number of base-minded, false-hearted, and dishonest Christians, unworthy the name of [p. 312] such, when they lose their common honestie.<sup>284</sup>

<sup>280</sup> See 1 Sam. 18.3 and 20.8 and 23.18.

<sup>281</sup> The references here have evidently become confused. Judah and Simeon feature in Judg. 1.3, 17, Caleb and Othniel in Judg. 1.12-13.

<sup>282</sup> Verse 22 is also relevant.

<sup>283</sup> Bernard characteristically supplies an incentive for adopting the behaviour he is enjoining.

<sup>284</sup> In this passage, Bernard indicates the importance of keeping one's word even when an oath is not taken. However, in his exposition of the next lemma, he develops the arguments he proposed in the first chapter maintaining the value of oaths. The one exception is common swearing, instead of which, Bernard maintains, one's word should suffice (98). It would appear that he is motivated to promote oaths because of his commitment to their role in the legal system, a role which was denied by the Anabaptists.

*As the Lord liveth.*] This is an oath, Jer. 4.2. This oath hee taketh, because it was a matter of great importance, and for that he would put the poore woman out of all doubt, and that shee should not feare the accomplishment, though he was rich, and she poore; he noble, shee meane; he an Israelite, and she a stranger of *Moab*. From this note; First, that *it is lawfull to take an oath*, against the Anabaptists assertion, of which see Chapter 1.17.<sup>285</sup> Secondly, *That the godly use to sweare by God*, when they sweare, and by none other; of this more at large also in chapter 1.17.<sup>286</sup> Thirdly, that the *forme of an oath is diversly expressed, and not one manner of way*; as thus, *I speake it before God; God is my witnesse; The Lord knoweth; As the Lord liveth; I protest before the Lord; I call God to record*, and divers such like, besides the common forme, *By God*, and so forth; which I note, to taxe the usuall swearing of many, who seeme to hate swearing in the common forme, and yet they themselves sweare too often in another forme: so subtile is Satan to beguile them in that, and therein to make them guiltie of that, from which they take themselves to be most free: but they be deceived, for when God, or his name and attributes are at any time mentioned, for this end, to confirme the truth of that which a man speaketh, it is an oath. Let men take notice hereof, and cease to be common swearers.<sup>287</sup> Fourthly, that *it is lawfull to sweare in privat cases*, as *Jonathan* did to *David*, and he to *Jonathan*; the spies to *Rahab*, and *Boaz* here to [p. 313] *Ruth*, in case of necessitie, and in weightie matters. In such cases wee may use our lawfull libertie, but yet with great warinesse, with great reverence of the high Majestie of God, not suddenly, not in passion, not without due advisement.<sup>288</sup> Fifthly, that *an oath is the confirming of*

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<sup>285</sup> See pp. 97-9.

<sup>286</sup> See p. 99.

<sup>287</sup> Bernard here develops his condemnation of common swearing, following Topsell's, in his treatment of Ruth 1.17 (Topsell 68-70; RR 98).

<sup>288</sup> 'advisement': 'The process of viewing or considering mentally; thought, thinking, consideration,

*the mind of another in the truth of that which is spoken* <Heb. 6.16>, whether of things past, spoken, or done, or of things present, or of things to come, and promised to be done. This is the end of *Boaz* swearing here. If this be so, then let men rest satisfied with an oath, as *Ruth* doth here, and as in some cases God would have men so to do <Exod. 22.11>, for it is the greatest confirmation of a truth that may bee, except the partie swearing either hath been convinced, or is at that present convincible, by good probabilities of falshood. If this be the end of an oath, then also let men care to sweare truly, that the mind of others may trust them, and relye upon their faithfull oath taken. But we have cause to bewaile these times, in which there bee such, as professing Christianitie, yet will use oathes, yea, and fearefull execrations to coozen with, to make their lyes and secret villanies intended, to bee the lesse suspected, as by miserable experience some simple and plaine meaning men may speake, being deluded by faire shewes of godlinesse, zeale of goodnesse, words confirmed by oathes, fearefull execrations, and counterfeit letters, that wicked hypocrites and Satanicall deceivers might attaine to their unlawfull desires. Let men therfore take heed of men, and beware whom they [p. 314] trust, seeing men dare with pretence of godlinesse, goe so farre in detestable villanies: but I wish him or them that practise it, to leave it betimes, else let them looke for deserved doome, without serious Repentance.<sup>289</sup>

*Lie down untill the morning.*] With these words hee endeth his conference, not spending the night in vaine or unnecessary prattling, as idle lovers and wanton suters

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reflection, deliberation.’ (OEDO).

<sup>289</sup> Here, Bernard develops the point he makes in his treatment of Ruth 1.17, that an oath must be in truth (98, 99). He is evidently concerned at the misuse he sees of the claim to be Christian and use oaths with religious authority. He may have been led to express this concern by Lavater’s comment on Boaz’s oath, that in his time even great Princes deceive others by swearing, and oppress them (Lavater 105v).

will doe: but having answered her request, and shewed to her his love and honest resolution, hee willeth her to lie downe untill the morning. By which words it seemeth she was risen up, as ready to depart, but that hee would not permit her so to doe, for the reasons before mentioned:<sup>290</sup> and because the night is ordained for rest, as the Psalmist saith: *At night man goeth to his rest.*<sup>291</sup> Neither is it safe for young women to bee abroad in the night; it savoureth not well, it befitteth not their sex, and may endanger their chastitie. Wee must beware of beeing Night-walkers: for Satan the prince of darkenesse will then be the most busie. Such also as hate the Light, love to be in darkenesse, as the theefe, and the adulterer <Job 24.15>. Againe, the night imboldeneth to al villanie and wickednes, which in the day time they will not dare to doe, as may bee seene in the Sodomites <Gen. 19<sup>292</sup>>, and Gibeonites <Judg. 19.22, 25<sup>293</sup>>. Lastly, Night-walkers have ever beene suspected for ill-disposed persons.<sup>294</sup>

[p. 315] Verse 14. *And shee lay at his feet untill the morning: and shee rose up before one could know another: for hee said, Let it not bee knowne, that a woman came into the floore.*

This verse sheweth how *Ruth* rested till the morning: then, her rising ready to depart; with the moving cause from *Boaz* speech, being a wary Caveat unto her.

*And shee lay at his feet untill the morning.*] This is added, to shew their chaste

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<sup>290</sup> See pp. 301-3.

<sup>291</sup> See Ps. 104.23, cited by Bernard on p. 265.

<sup>292</sup> Probably, specifically, verses 4-11, in which the Sodomites tried to seize the two messengers of God for sodomy.

<sup>293</sup> Bernard refers to the 'sons of Belial' who sought sodomy with a Levite and raped his concubine in Gibeah.

<sup>294</sup> Here, turning to exhort his readers not to go out at night, Bernard consolidates his allusions to evildoing at night-time on pp. 265 and 276. He returns to this subject on p. 320.

and continent behaviour: for if they had offended, the holy Ghost, who spared not *Noahs* drunkennesse, *Lots* incest, *Dauids* adultery, would not have concealed this fact, if so they had thereof been guilty.<sup>295</sup> They were both honest and feared God: and therefore they would not commit such wickednesse, albeit they had occasion offred. Whereby wee may learne, that *where the feare of God and honesty beareth sway, there chastity may bee preserved, though occasion bee offered to the contrary*. Behold this here in old *Boaz*, and elsewhere in young *Joseph*; there was neither lechery in the one, nor strength of lust, nor youthfull wantonnesse in the other: for there lust is bridled, where the feare of God possesseth the heart, and honesty lodgeth. To bee kept therefore from this evill, let these vertuous examples guide us, that lust over-beare us not, as it doth in such as seeke occasions to sinne in this kind: *neighing*, as *Jeremie* speaketh, *after their neighbours wives*.<sup>296</sup> And such also, though they seeke not occa- [p. 316] sion, like the former; yet they easily take occasion to offend this way, with virgins, with married wives, and with those whom they thinke to marry with;<sup>297</sup> and this last is held no offence at all by them: because they thinke that marriage amendeth all. But first it is an argument of a strong and unbridled lust, which should not beare rule in Christians. Secondly, if the man hap to die before marriage, (as who is certaine of life?) the woman being with child, becommeth infamous, and shee that should have beene a wife, is left as an harlot.

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<sup>295</sup> Here, Bernard follows Lavater (*Lavater* 106v). Topsell similarly comments that the holy Ghost signifies by these words that Boaz and Ruth were not incontinent (192). By drawing attention at this point to the divine inspiration of the biblical text, the commentators show that they feel the need to convince their readers that nothing wrong happened. By following Lavater in mentioning Noah, Lot and David here, Bernard at the outset highlights the issue which he comes to later – that some of the godly sin (Topsell mentions Noah, David, and Judah in his equivalent section on the diversity of the distribution of God's gifts, (195)).

<sup>296</sup> See Jer. 5.8.

<sup>297</sup> Bernard's categories of lustful individuals correspond loosely to Lavater's two categories, of old and young lustful men (*Lavater* 107v). Topsell also maintains that there is much sexual immorality in his society, emphasising the divine punishment of it (193-4). The commentators share the perception that the godly are surrounded by a distinctly ungodly society (see the Introduction section 2).



Thirdly, it is an offence to the Church, being knowne, and punishable by the same, which offence the godly must avoid: *Give no offence*, (saith the Apostle) *to Jew, nor Gentile, nor to the Church of God* <1 Cor. 10.32>. Fourthly and lastly, it beseemeth not the holinesse of the publicke solemnization of marriage, to which the parties should come undefiled, as the Assembly and Congregation of God doe in charitie judge of them. Note besides, that these two godly persons kept themselves chaste, and how others accounted also godly, and that so were, yet were very fowly overtaken in this sinne of the flesh, as wee have example in *Lot* in a cave with his daughters; *Judah* with *Tamar*; and *David* with *Bathsheba*.<sup>298</sup> From whence observe, that *Gods owne deare Children have not all the like measure of grace*, nor power to resist temptations, and to subdue their owne corruptions. In the holy Word of God wee shall find three sorts of the godly: some hardly found fault with, their infirmities passed over with silence; such a [p. 317] one was *Isaac*, *Boaz* heere, so *Josua*, *Samuel*, *Daniel*, *Mephibosheth*, *Jonathan*, *Zacharie* and *Elizabeth*, *Simeon*, *Anna*, the *Virgin Mary*, and others.<sup>299</sup> Some are noted with their frailties and light infirmities, being most excellent Saints of God, as *Moses*, *Job*, *Jeremie*, *Hezechias*, and *Josias*, and some others. A third sort are stained with foule offences, as *David* with adulterie and murther; *Judah* with incest, and so *Lot*; *Aaron* with Idolatry; and *Peter* with perjurie: for the Lord affordeth not the like grace in equall measure unto

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<sup>298</sup> Bernard's derivation of this lesson from Topsell is indicated by a number of common elements. Both commentators cite Judah and Tamar, and David and Bathsheba as sinning in the flesh by contrast with stated chaste individuals (Topsell 194). Like Topsell, Bernard explains that God does not give an equal measure of grace to all the godly, who cannot all subdue their corruptions (Topsell 195). Both make a similar exhortation that the persons of sinners are not to be condemned (Topsell 195-6). Bernard details one of the benefits which Topsell claims result from the godly having faults (Topsell 196). Bernard also responds to those who condemn religion because some of the godly fall (Topsell 196). However, Bernard modifies Topsell's discussion, particularly in ways which make the points more forceful, as is indicated in this edition.

<sup>299</sup> Bernard evidently derives this list essentially from Topsell (Topsell 196), but moves it from its less pertinent place, in addressing the condemnation of the godly on the grounds of falls of some of them, to here, where it forms part of a clear illustration of God's not giving an equal measure of grace to all.

all. All are sanctified: yet corruptions more sway in one then in another, as these instances shew, and as experience daily teacheth. Therefore let us not thinke to find the like grace in all, and the like mortification of corruption: for God distributeth his gifts and the measure, as it pleaseth him. None are then to bee condemned simply for bad persons, as if they were not in the number of Gods Saints; because they bee not in all things like their brethren: for they, even both sorts of them may bee the Lords, and yet in some thing bee very much unlike. *Joseph* inticed by his mistresse, preserved his chastitie: but *David* inticed another mans wife, and lay with her. *Boaz* alone with *Ruth* would not sinne in fornication: but *Lot* alone with his daughters committed incest. *Nathaniel* was a true Israelite without guile:<sup>300</sup> but *Jacob* first called *Israel*, of whom came all the Israelites, dissembled, and lyed to his owne father: *Moses* a meeke man, but *Jonah* of a very froward spirit: and yet al of them good men, and the blessed [p. 318] Saints of God. This therefore justly reproveth those, who seeing men professing Religion, and yet to differ in their courses, some to live unreprouably, and others to give great offence in their falls, though of infirmitie, doe utterly condemne them all as hypocrites, and as dissemblers. Yea, this checketh them themselves for deadly censuring one another, when if any man be overtaken in any fault: they which be spirituall, should restore such an one in the spirit of meekenesse, considering themselves, lest they also be tempted <Gal. 6.1>. If any man heere aske, *Why doth not God make all his Children to be alike religiously minded one as well as another?* I answer, the Lord may doe it for these reasons. First, for the good many times of the godly themselves: for they are suffered to fall for their greater humiliation, the more to let them see their owne weakenesse, to shew that they stand not of themselves; to make them the more to deny themselves,

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<sup>300</sup> See John 1.47.

not to bee lifted up with any conceit of their owne goodnesse, or merit; but to magnifie Gods mercy for their daily preservation, and for his goodnesse towards them: and after their fall returning to God, and feeling peace in their renewed Repentance, they will the more closely sticke to God, more earnestly pray, and more fervently love him: for so great good the Lord workes in his Children after their falls; yea such humiliation will bee wrought thereby in them; and such comfort, joy, and love in God after their recoverie, as no outward crosses, nor outward deliverances can ever doe the [p. 319\*] like.<sup>301</sup> Secondly, for the further damnation of the wicked, who at the falls of the godly doe harden their hearts the more against all Religion, thinking it to bee a vaine thing, and that such as follow and embrace it, are no better than others, and that the best be but hypocrites: because they see some grievously overtaken; when these miserable soules should hereby be moved the more to feare their owne damnation, except they repent and take a better course: for if the righteous scarcely bee saved; if they so hardly get out of their corruptions; if they bee so fearefully overtaken, who reade, meditate, heare the Word, conferre thereof, pray much, and humble themselves with teares; where shall the wicked and sinner appeare <1 Pet. 4.18>? How can the common and carelesse Christian bee saved? Thus should they reason, to rowze up their spirits to make them to seeke God, and feare damnation, and not take occasion by the falls of some, to condemne the profession of Religion it selfe in others, and so to make no account thereof in themselves to the hardning of their owne hearts, and so heaping upon themselves the just deserved

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<sup>301</sup> Here, Bernard separates out the theological consideration of God's beneficial purpose in giving different individuals different measures of grace, whereas Topsell incorporates this into his arguments concerning how individuals should behave (Topsell 195, 196). Bernard therefore gives this theological lesson prominence. He chooses to select one of Topsell's three explanations, modifies it, and sets it out more fully. (Topsell 196).

vengeance.<sup>302</sup>

*And she rose up, before one could know another.]* That shee might bee gone away out of the floore before the light, or at the dawning of the day, very earely, ere others should bee stirring. This shee did perhaps out of a joy of heart, and desire to bee with *Naomi*, to tell her the successe of her counsell, which she carefully followed, as it may seeme by her hasty relation of the matter unto [p. 320] her mother in law, when shee came unto her, as shall bee shewed in the 16 verse.<sup>303</sup> Note heere, that *they bee not drowzie-headed, whose hearts are taken up with their businesse*: they can rise betimes, and prevent the day, whether it bee the desire of getting goods, or enjoying pleasure, or to doe mischief, which makes some not to rest: or that it bee such joy as was heere in *Ruth*; or a good will to doe a thing, as in *Abraham* to obey God, hee arose up earely <Gen. 22.3>; so *Jacob* to get to his Uncles <Gen. 28.18>; *Josua* to find out the transgressour in the excommunicate thing,<sup>304</sup> to put evill away from Israel <Josh. 7.16>; *David* to go with that which his father sent unto the hoast <1 Sam. 17.20>. So that let the heart be taken up with love, care, joy, desire, it will doe any thing; the spirit of drowzinesse will bee shaken off: for it is the carelesse minde which maketh slothfull. To bee therefore stirring, and to raise up our selves out of the bed of idlenesse, wee must set our hearts upon our affaires. I might also note, how *darkenesse keeps us from the knowledge of one another*: therefore in darkenesse man feareth not the face of man, and so is bold to doe evill; because hee is hid from the sight of others: and as it is in bodily

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<sup>302</sup> Bernard retains from Topsell's discussion of those who condemn all believers indiscriminately (Topsell 196) only his direct attack on these individuals, and makes this attack more forceful. Topsell defends the godly and provides explanations for some of the godly having faults, which include the damnation of the wicked.

<sup>303</sup> See p. 329.

<sup>304</sup> 'excommunicate things (tr. Heb. *herem*): 'objects devoted to destruction.' (OEDQ).

darkenesse, so in spirituall; the ignorant and blind in soule dare do any thing, they blush not, neither be they ashamed, which others enlightened are afraid to commit; neither can they discerne one another: for the light of Truth they have not. But yet though men can bee hid in darkenesse from men, they cannot bee so from God.

[p. 321] *For hee said, (or as others reade) And hee said, Let it not bee knowne that a woman came into the floore.]* If you reade *For*, it is a reason from *Boaz* his speech of her so soone rising; if *And*, then it is his admonition to her, that beeing risen, shee should so get her into the city, that others might not know that they were alone together in the floore that night.<sup>305</sup> Howsoever it bee read, *Boaz* herein sheweth his care of his and her honest name and credit, which might hereby bee brought into suspition,<sup>306</sup> albeit their consciences had told them, that they had done nothing worthy blame, for any act of dishonestie.<sup>307</sup> From hence let us note, First, that *it never was, neither yet is a matter of good report, but a suspition rather of evill, for a man and a woman to be taken together alone in places unfit, unusuall, and at times unseasonable.* This the words of *Boaz* doe plainely heere give us to

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<sup>305</sup> Bernard's exposition of the previous lemma suggests that he favours the latter reading, although he follows Lavater (106r) and Topsell (191) in putting 'for' in his rendering of the biblical verse. Lavater (108r) and Topsell (196, 199) support the reading 'for' in their expositions, Lavater discounting the interpretation of the Targum that Boaz told his servant not to let it be known to any man that a woman came into the threshing floor (BTR 28), and following Josephus's interpretation (which is that Boaz roused Ruth before his servants began work, *Josephus* [Loeb] 149).

<sup>306</sup> Here, Bernard evidently uses the word 'suspition' in a way which corresponds with Topsell's interpretation that Boaz was afraid that people might judge his being with Ruth to be unlawful (Topsell 199). The concept that evil appearances give rise to adverse judgement is formulated by Lavater. (108v). See the Introduction section 6.3. Bernard does not, however, explicitly follow Topsell in drawing attention to the risk of damaging slander, which, Topsell claims, Boaz feared (Topsell 196-7). Possibly, Topsell, in noting this, was supplying an additional motivation for being discreet to those of preventing adverse judgement and of not leading others astray (which Bernard enjoins below). This interpretation will be seen to receive support from Lavater's conclusions about the wicked, and this will be discussed in connection with Bernard's comments on the wicked with which he concludes this exposition.

<sup>307</sup> It may be worth remarking here that Topsell is more critical of the conduct of Boaz and Ruth than Bernard and Lavater (Lavater 108r). He mentions that the circumstances of time, place and persons must be considered to determine whether a thing is lawful. He goes on to declare that 'specially according to this present scripture of Bohaz and Ruth' he wishes an end to the accompanying of men and women in his society (199-200).

understand: for man is so apt to this sinne of the flesh; yea the best, without especial grace, as light occasions breed suspicions: because also men are not so charitable as they should bee, if any least shew of evill may seeme to bee given this way. Therefore let such as would not bee suspected, beware how they be in company alone together, when and where suspicions may arise. Secondly, that *it is not enough to have our consciences cleare before God, but our selves cleare of giving just suspicion of evill, before men*. This was Boaz his care, and Saint Pauls: for it is not enough to have a good conscience within, but we must have care of our good name, to be well reported of abroad <Acts 24.16; 2 Cor. 8.21>; which [p. 322] is an excellent thing, better then riches, then oyntment <Prov. 22.1; Eccles. 7.1; Heb. 11.2, 39; 3 John 12>. And this the godly will endeavour to obtaine, to stop the mouthes of adversaries, that they may bee put to rebuke, and to procure glory to the Gospell which they doe professe <1 Pet. 2.12>. This being our duetie, then are they reproveable which make no conscience of offence<sup>308</sup> before men: because, say they, our hearts condemne not us, wee know wee doe not what men suspect: when yet the Apostle forbids offences, and to looke to expediencie, and not simply to the lawfulnessse of a thing <1 Cor. 10.32 and 12.13<sup>309</sup>>, and to avoid all appearances of evill.<sup>310</sup> There are another sort worse than these, who are so farre from avoiding

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<sup>308</sup> ‘offence’: ‘A stumbling block; a cause of spiritual or moral stumbling; an occasion of unbelief, doubt, or apostasy.’ (OEDO).

<sup>309</sup> The second reference seems to be derived from Topsell (Topsell 199) where he considers Boaz’s fear of leading others astray, and is evidently erroneous. The correct reference can be found from Topsell’s paraphrasing of it in his text. It is 1 Cor. 6.12.

<sup>310</sup> See 1 Thess. 5.22. This reference also is given by Topsell in connection with offence (197). Bernard and Topsell are preceded by Lavater in connecting this injunction by St. Paul to abstain from all appearance of evil with offence (Lavater 108r). The three commentators’ individual use of this biblical reference in connection with offence has been commented on when it is mentioned earlier by Bernard (p. 266). The fact that Bernard here collects together St. Paul’s statements which can be interpreted to relate to offence means that he makes its prohibition emphatic. He does not make explicit the fear (expressed by Topsell, pp. 199, 201) that offences could threaten religion. This may reflect his reluctance to admit that secular attitudes were widespread in his time.

suspition of evill, as they are not ashamed of the evill it selfe, being past shame, and dare openly boast of their lewdnesse, without blushing, of which both *Esai* and *Jeremie* doe complaine <Isa. 3.9; Jer. 6.15 and 8.12>.<sup>311</sup>

Verse 15. *Also hee said, Bring the vaile that thou hast upon thee, and hold it. And when shee held it, hee measured six measures of Barley, and laid it on her: and shee went into the Citie.*

Here is *Boaz* his liberality and testimonie of love, noting wherein it was received, what and how much hee gave, his helping her up with it to convey and carry it away. And lastly, his and her departure into the citie.

*Also hee said.*] *Boaz* his former speech was for her credit, but this is for her comfort; the former stood in words, but this in a good work of mercy. [p. 323] *A good mans love appeareth in word and in deed, in good counsell, and in good works of comfort also.* This sheweth love to bee perfect, not feigned; this is to follow the Apostle *John* his exhortation, not to love in word and tongue onely, but in deed and in truth <1 John 3.18>: so loved *Boaz*, and so doe all blessed men love. If therefore the love of worke bee wanting, and onely the love of word, it is counterfeit love, and Saint *James* rejecteth it, as no love <Jas. 2<sup>312</sup>>.

*Bring the vaile that thou hast upon thee, and hold it.*] He tooke occasion from

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<sup>311</sup> In only noting that these biblical passages illustrate that the ungodly are worse than those godly who fall short, Bernard does not develop Lavater's point about the same and similar passages, that is, the wicked are motivated by a desire to escape punishment. Lavater goes on to observe that we should also consider other men's good names and honesty (*Lavater* 108v-109r). Topsell may be seizing on Lavater's point when he attributes Boaz's action of warning Ruth to a fear of slander, and demonstrates how slander has afflicted the godly (196-7). He returns to the subject of slander on p. 198, where he warns that if people associate with the wicked, slander will result. Bernard's case is less forceful because he does not invoke slander as a consequence of not being discreet.

<sup>312</sup> Specifically, verses 14-26.

this loose vaile, to bestow come upon her: for *a good man, in his willingnesse to do good, will take the smallest occasion to shew it*. This word *vaile* in another place is translated *mantle* <Isa. 3.22>. It was a loose garment cast upon her, to keepe her warme, and to cover her in the night. There was used also among them another vaile for the day, to throw over their heads and faces for modestie sake: such an one had faire *Rebecca* <Gen. 24.65>, whose modestie may condemne the wanton going of our women, who yet come short of *Rebecca* for beauty. I wish also they were not more short of her for honesty. The Arabian women, yea and so the heathen Romane women went covered, as doe now the women in Spaine, not halfe naked, as many harlotries<sup>313</sup> doe now in England, to the shame of Religion, and disgrace of the Gospell, having both heathen and Papists to condemne them. But what care such for the Gospell, which want grace? or for Religion, which are of none at all, and never yet had their consciences bound [p. 324] to the obedience thereof, but live as Libertines, doing what they list, walking after the lust of their owne hearts.<sup>314</sup>

*And when shee held it.*] This implieth some stay till shee had folded it, to receive his kindnesse: for *he that mindeth truely to doe the poore good, can bee content to stay till they can bee ready to receive it*. Boaz was not like such as seeme to be willing to give the poore a penny, and yet will be gone before hee can open his purse to change the niggards silver: so they blame his not readinesse to receive what they onely pretended, but never from heart intended: so lewdly<sup>315</sup> deluding the poore.

<sup>313</sup> 'harlotry': 'A harlot; a term of opprobrium for a woman.' (OEDO).

<sup>314</sup> Bernard emphasises that women who dress immodestly are amongst the ungodly whom he perceives to surround the godly. His observation that their conduct shames religion would indicate the failure of the godly to convert the ungodly, as opposed to the criticism by the ungodly of the godly for falling. However, this interpretation does not seem to correspond with his claim on p. 173 that some Christian women show themselves almost naked in this way, unless 'Christian' here is simply meant to apply to the inhabitant of a Christian country. Possibly, Bernard's extreme disapproval of the practice of women dressing immodestly, brought up on three occasions (here, on p. 173 and on p. 261) resulted in this scathing attack on the third occasion. See also the Introduction section 6.3.

<sup>315</sup> 'lewdly': 'Wickedly, evilly, vilely, mischievously.' (OEDO).



*Boaz* had shewed her great kindnesse before, which shee received, and now hee offers her this mercy againe, which shee refuseth not. For *it is no unmannerlinesse, nor disgrace, to take kindnesse offred of friends, though the parties before have beene chargeable,*<sup>316</sup> *and have often received of their bountie*; so long as the one sort be able, and voluntarily doe give, and the other bee poore, and not importunate yet standing in need to receive: for poverty is a heavie burthen, and may justly make excuse for them. And therefore such are not to bee blamed, which do not refuse the often offred bounties of friends: but indeed, such as need not, and will bee chargeable to frank-hearted friends, such are basely covetous, and deserve reproofe, rather then to have their desire.<sup>317</sup>

*Hee measured six measures of Barley.*] *Boaz* had given much before by his servants: now, by his owne hand: yet not at randome, taking out of [p. 325] the heape, hee knew not what; but he measured that to her which hee gave her. Whence note from his person still giving unto *Ruth*, and in her to *Naomi*: that *a liberall and mercifull heart is not weary of well-doing*. *Cornelius* a good and devout man, gave daily much almes unto the poore:<sup>318</sup> for his soule delighteth in mercy and workes of charity, and desiring to bee rich in good workes, as the Apostle exhorteth <1 Tim. 6<sup>319</sup>>. These examples let us imitate and follow, wee must not bee wearie of well-doing <2 Thess. 3.13; Gal. 6.9-10>; and if we have faith, we will shew forth good workes, if it bee lively and not dead faith <Jas. 2<sup>320</sup>>.<sup>321</sup> They are therefore

<sup>316</sup> 'chargeable': 'Burdensome (as a tax or payment); costly, expensive.' (OEDO).

<sup>317</sup> Bernard balances his initial formulation corresponding to Topsell's exhortations to give repeatedly to the poor with a criticism of those who take charity when they do not need it (Topsell 201-2; Bernard develops Topsell's argument in expounding the next lemma). That is, he clearly defines which of the poor are undeserving. He is more explicit than Lavater, who declares that God will not have excused those covetous people who claim that they do not know which individuals are worthy of relief (Lavater 109v).

<sup>318</sup> See Acts 10.1-2.

<sup>319</sup> Specifically, verse 18.

<sup>320</sup> Specifically, verses 17, 20, 26.

reproveable, who bee wearie of well-doing; they would give once, but not often, neither at any time much: and yet wee beg bread at Gods hands daily, and repine if wee have it not, and not onely for the present, but for the time to come. It is noted of *Titus Vespasian*, that hee thought he had lost that day, in which he had not performed some office of beneficence <Suetonius, *Titus Vespasian*<sup>322</sup>>. Few Christians think as this Heathen thought: for then would our great men give more, and spend lesse vainely, that the poore might fare the better. Another sort are heere faultie, who continue to give now and then, but are loth to encrease their liberality, as God encreaseth his bounty in mercy towards them: for if they grow rich, it is hee that giveth them power to get riches <Deut. 8.18; Hos. 2.8>. The third sort are such as turne their love wholly to themselves, and thinke all little enough for themselves, and that through base covetousnesse, being never satisfied, so as [p. 326] they live of usurie and oppression, getting from others what they can; or through an aspyring spirit, getting goods to grow great in the world; or else of a vaine unthriftie humour of spending, can spare nothing to give to the poore; because his consuming guests, (which ever lodge with him) whoredome, drunkennesse, pride, and love of play, doe keepe him still so bare of money. Another lesson may we learne hence, from *Boaz* his manner of giving by measure, and not hand over head, as wee say, without discretion, that *Liberality is not lavish of Gods blessings, giving in judgement, and not without consideration*: for every vertue either is, or should be guided with prudence. This discretion in *Boaz* is commendable; and they that will consider what

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<sup>321</sup> In identifying Boaz's generosity a practical example of St. Paul's exhortation not to be weary of well-doing, Bernard follows Topsell's argument (Topsell 201-2). Furthermore, he develops Topsell's point by adding the example of Cornelius and further biblical pronouncements regarding works (1 Tim. 6.[18] and Jas. 2.[ 17, 20, 26]). Bernard goes on to develop Topsell's mention of many people who will only do good once or twice to one person despite the obligation to give, having prayed daily for daily bread (Topsell 201).

<sup>322</sup> See Suetonius, *Suetonius (Lives of the Caesars)*, 8.7, vol. 2 pp. 330-1.

they give, before they give, in so doing, are not to be reproved.<sup>323</sup>

*And laid it on her.]* See how a willing Giver doth not onely bestow a benefit, but helpeth the party if need be, to receive the same: and so doth Boaz here; and so doth also our gracious God in giving his blessings to us. If wee then bee willing to doe a good turne, and to bestow a favour upon any, let us not bee wanting in any needfull thing, to further our owne liberalitie towards them: for this will shew, that what wee give, wee give with all our hearts unto them.

*And she went into the citie.]* Our last Translation is, *shee went*: but it should be *hee*, as the Hebrew word will make good,<sup>324</sup> and the testimony of the Learned in that tongue <Junius,<sup>325</sup> Drusius,<sup>326</sup> Lavater.<sup>327</sup>>: both went into the citie, shee to her mother, as the next words in the [p. 327] Story do shew, which by reason of the continuation and series of the narration, maketh it seeme most likely that *shee* went into the city, as it is commonly translated; and *he* likewise went into the city to dispatch the businesse, and to do what hee had promised to *Ruth*, as it is cleare in the next Chapter. By thus reading it, and by considering how *Boaz* before could lye downe by the corne,<sup>328</sup> but now out of his affection to marry with *Ruth*, can leave all, to finish that businesse, wee may learne, that *love is impatient of delay, and maketh a man to lay aside other cares, to enjoy his beloved.*<sup>329</sup> Concerning the force of this

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<sup>323</sup> Bernard again acknowledges a possible objection of the wealthy - that they should not be expected to give without stint.

<sup>324</sup> Here, Bernard may be drawing on the Authorised Version of 1611, which states 'he went into the citie' (Wright 120).

<sup>325</sup> Franciscus Junius (1545-1602), and Immanuel Tremellius, *Testamenti Veteris Biblia Sacra* (1610, first published 1581) 125.

<sup>326</sup> Johannes van der Driesche (Drusius) (1550-1616), *Historia Ruth ex Ebraeo Latine conversa* (1632) 59.

<sup>327</sup> See *Lavater* 110r.

<sup>328</sup> See pp. 273-4.

<sup>329</sup> Bernard makes an interpretation of Boaz's promptness complementary to the one he makes on pp. 303-4, which avoids both rashness and remissness in business. Here, he draws attention to the dangers of acting on the impulse of love, which may incline a person to rashness.

affection, see it in *Samson* to the maiden of *Timnah* <Judg. 14.2-3>; in *Jacob* to *Rachel*; and in *Sichem* to *Dinah* <Gen. 29.20, 30 and 34.3[,] 8, 12, 19>: for love winneth the whole man, and captivateth his thoughts to the partie beloved, as may also be seen in *Samsons* inordinate love to *Delilah* <Judg. 16.4, 16>; and in *Amnon* to *Tamar* <2 Sam. 13.2, 4>. Seeing this affection is so strong, let us labour to bridle it, that it rule not over us for the world or the flesh; and for this end let us set it upon better things worthy our love to the utmost, even on spirituall and heavenly things, upon Christ <Col. 3.1<sup>330</sup>>, as the Spouse in the Canticles did <Song Sol. 1.2-3, 7 and 2.14<sup>331</sup>>, and Saint *Paul*; on his Word, as *David* <Ps. 119<sup>332</sup>>; on his Church, as *Moses* did <Heb. 11<sup>333</sup>>; and on the appearing of Jesus Christ for our finall deliverance, as all should <2 Tim. 4.8>: thus to fixe our love, will make it holy, and our selves happy.

[p. 328] Verse 16. *And when shee came to her mother in law, shee said, Who art thou, my daughter? And she told her all that the man had done unto her.*

*Ruths* returne from the floore to *Naomi*, where a question is asked and answered, with a full relation of all that which had happened.

*And when she came to her mother in law.*] *Ruth* having sped, as you heare, and received such kindnesse for the present, and such hope for the time to come, home she goeth with a glad heart, and that without delay; shee hath not her by-walkes, but having done what shee went about, according to the advice of *Naomi*, shee, as I said,

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<sup>330</sup> Verse 2 is also relevant.

<sup>331</sup> Bernard draws upon the allegorical interpretation of the Song of Solomon as a description of the mutual love of Christ and his church.

<sup>332</sup> Specifically, verse 10.

<sup>333</sup> Specifically, verses 24-9.

returneth home againe. Three things might move *Ruth* to hasten home: the danger of the way, being so earely before day;<sup>334</sup> the burthen which shee bare upon her backe, to bee eased thereof; and her joy to impart to her mother her happy successe. As these made her hie home, and to desire to bee with her mother: so should the like make us desirous to bee at our home in Heaven: first, the danger we be in, while here we live in this darke world; then, the burthen of sinne, which wee doe beare, of which we should be weary, and grone till wee bee delivered: and thirdly, our inward joy conceived of our future happinesse for ever and for ever.

*Who art thou, my daughter?*] So *Naomi* speaketh, because it was not yet day, that shee might [p. 329] know her, and therefore asketh who shee was. It may seeme by this, that *Naomi* her house was neither bolted nor barred, *Ruth* comming in so easily, and *Naomi* not knowing, who it was at the first: for poore folkes need feare no robbing.

*And shee told her all that the man had done unto her.*] That is, shee related all his kind speeches, and his promise of marrying of her, if the other kinsman did refuse her, as appeareth by *Naomi* her speech in the 18 verse: so that *done* is here put for his word and promise which should be done: which argueth her perswasion that he would doe it. And *it is an excellent promise of a man to be held so faithfull, that his promise may bee said to bee done, for the certaintie thereof before it bee done.* A rare vertue in these daies, even among those that would be held no common Protestants. Where almost is hee, of whom it might be said, when he hath promised, that it is done? where is mans faithfulnessse become? Mint, Annise, and Cummine is stood upon; but judgement, mercy, and faith, the weightier matters of the Law are

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<sup>334</sup> Bernard evidently discounts Lavater's opinion that Boaz accompanied Ruth into the city to protect her (*Lavater* 110r). However, once again, he draws attention to the danger of Ruth's enterprise.

omitted.<sup>335</sup> *Naomi* asketh *Ruth* who she was? Who answereth not to that, but forthwith relateth *Boaz* his kindnesse with which her mind was taken up: for *we speedily relate such things as our hearts be delighted in, and much taken up with*: for of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, whether it be cause of joy or sorrow. If then wee would speake of a matter, let our hearts bee affected therewith; that will make us speake readily, and neglect other conference: many cannot speake of [p. 330] God nor Religion; and some that can, will not, desire not: the reason is, their hearts are not affected therewith; for if they were, they would be very ready to speake thereof.

Verse 17. *And shee said, These sixe measures of Barley gave hee mee: for hee said to mee, Goe not emptie unto thy mother in law.*

The last words of *Ruth* in this Booke, as here to *Naomi* also, shewing who it was that gave the corne, and for whose sake.

*And she said, These sixe measures of Barley gave he me.]* Before, *Ruth* telleth of his good words; and here shee sheweth his good workes: for *good words and good workes ever concurre where true love is*, else it is feigned: of which I have spoken before.<sup>336</sup> In that *Ruth* doth bring home all that which was given to her mother, and kept nothing backe, to buy her selfe any necessities, by making sale thereof, it teacheth children honestie:<sup>337</sup> for *honest children will not rob their parents of any*

<sup>335</sup> See Matt. 23.23. Bernard here emphasises the importance of keeping one's word which he perceives to be neglected, and does not refer to the oath Boaz made to Ruth in verse 13. The importance of keeping one's word even when an oath is not taken is also indicated on p. 294 and on pp. 311-12, as noted there. Perhaps Bernard recognises Jesus's prohibition of swearing in Matt. 5.37 although he feels compelled to endorse the legitimacy of oaths in the legal system in particular (see pp. 97-100, 312-14).

<sup>336</sup> See pp. 162, 322-3.

<sup>337</sup> After the controversial events on the threshing floor, Bernard finds evidence of Ruth's

thing, as *Micah* did, who stole eleven hundred shekles of silver from his mother, which caused her bitterly to curse him, till it was restored to her againe <Judg. 17.1-2>. Good children will not doe so wickedly, though other thinke it no transgression, as *Salomon* speaketh <Prov. 28.24>.

*For he said to me, Goe not emptie unto thy mother in law.] Ruth* telleth why *Boaz* was so liberall, not for her sake onely, but for *Naomi* her sake also, and that chiefly in this kindnesse to her. *Ruth* [p. 331] taketh not this to her selfe, concealing *Boaz* his loving respect to *Naomi*, as if all had beene done in favour of her owne selfe, bringing it to *Naomi* as a token of her love to her, thereby thinking to bind her the more unto her by that office: but presenting it as a favour from *Boaz* unto her also, relateth the truth of the thing as it passed. By which wee may observe, that *true and honest minds are just in all their relations*, in that which they doe know, without colour,<sup>338</sup> without deceit: for they love truth, and doe speake it from simplicitie of heart <Ps. 15.2>, which is the propertie of the godly, and which wee must labour for.<sup>339</sup> Againe, *the true and honest-minded seeke not to procure favour and thanks by that which is the bountie of another*, as many doe in distributing the almes and benevolence of others, as if it were from themselves, seeking to reape that which they sowed not, and to receive, which they deserve not. Thirdly note, that *Boaz* forgets not *Naomi* absent: for *a faithfull friend is mindfull of such as hee loveth, though absent*. *Ebedmelech* the Morian loved *Jeremie*, he therefore forgot him not, though out of sight, out of the Court, and now in a miserable prison, but went boldly to the King for him, and reproveth the Lords and Princes openly for doing that wrong

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conventional good conduct.

<sup>338</sup> 'without colour': 'without dissembling or disguise.' (OEDO).

<sup>339</sup> Bernard here finds another reason for commending Ruth for good conduct: exemplary truthfulness. This emphasis on the importance of speaking the truth reinforces his discussions on the subject on pp. 157-9, 298-9.

to *Jeremie* <Jer. 38.9>. *Darius* affected *Daniel*, and therefore could not be unmindfull of him <Dan. 6<sup>340</sup>>. This is true friendship, and not like the love of such, of whom it may bee said, Out of sight, out of minde, like the unkind and forgetfull Butler of *Pharaoh*, who for a long space for- [p. 332] got innocent *Joseph*, who interpreted to him his dreame in prison, and that to his great comfort: of whom he also prayed to be remembred, when he came to his place againe; but the Butler was so glad of his owne prosperity, that hee had no mind to thinke of *Josephs* adversitie.<sup>341</sup> Such is the love of men, too common in these dayes; much kindnesse in shew to mens faces, but if the backe be once turned, love is likewise turned, and quite vanished away.

Verse 18. *Then said shee, Sit still, my daughter, untill thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not bee in rest, untill hee have finished the thing this day.*

*Naomi* her last words to *Ruth*, noted in this Story, being an exhortation: in which is to bee observed, to what, how long, and the reason why.

*Then said shee, Sit still, my daughter.*] *Naomi* having heard and seene such testimony of *Boaz* his love, and knowing his honest nature and true affection, shee exhorteth *Ruth* to sit still, that is, to bee of a quiet mind, waiting with patience the issue. The words are figurative, and translated from the action of the body, to the action of the mind. By this that *Naomi* willeth her to bee quiet in mind, and without feare, and restlesnesse of spirit; wee may learne, that *there is an unquietnesse of*

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<sup>340</sup> The whole chapter is relevant.

<sup>341</sup> See Gen. 40.23.



*minde in every one naturally to have that affected, which the heart longeth after*, as may be [p. 333] seene in *Boaz*, as before is noted;<sup>342</sup> so in *Jacob* to see *Joseph*, when he heard that hee was alive <Gen. 45.4, 28>; in *Abrahams* servant, in procuring and bringing home a wife to *Isaac* <Gen. 24.12, 56>; in the Israelites, seeking to punish the Gibeonites, for the villanie committed upon the Levites wife <Judg. 20.1, 18-19, 24, 28>; and as in good, so also is the heart restles in seeking to bring evill to passe: for the wicked cannot rest, till they have done evill. See this in *Delilah*, in hope of money, to betray *Samson* into the hands of the Philistims <Judg. 16<sup>343</sup>>; and in *Judas*, to deliver Christ to his Enemies; and in *Absalom*, to get the Kingdome from his father. Which earnestnesse ariseth sometime of feare, as *Ruths* here fearing to faile of her desire; sometime of covetousnesse and desire of gaine, as in *Judas* and *Delilah*; of malice and desire of revenge, as in the Scribes and Pharises, Enemies of Christ; of joy and gladnesse, as in *Abrahams* servant; of an aspyring and vaine-glorious humour, as in *Absalom*; of love and affection to one, as in *Sichem* to *Dinah*.<sup>344</sup> By this then may wee see, whence it is that men pursue their pleasures, profits, honors, and their desires in that which they goe about so eagerly, even because they have their hearts fixed thereupon: and on the contrary, why people so little follow after godlinesse, so much neglect it, even for that their hearts are farre from it. Thus may wee learne to judge of our selves, and thus wee lay open our selves to be judged of others.

*Untill thou know how the matter will fall.*] As if shee had said, Thou hast done thy part, the issue [p. 334] is in Gods hands, which thou must waite for with patience: for *when wee have done, what on our behalfe is to be done, then are we to*

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<sup>342</sup> See p. 327.

<sup>343</sup> Specifically, verses 5-21.

<sup>344</sup> See Gen. 34.2-3.

*rest in the expectation of the issue, as Naomi adviseth Ruth heere. So must we waite on God, trust in him, and commit our wayes unto him, as we bee exhorted <Isa. 28.16;<sup>345</sup> Ps. 37.5; Ps. 37.3>: but yet in well-doing, and in the exercise of Prayer, as Isaac did for good successe to his fathers servant, when hee went to get a wife for him <Gen. 24<sup>346</sup>>; and as Moses did for the victory, when the Israelites fought against the Amalekites <Exod. 17.11-12>.<sup>347</sup>*

*For the man will not be in rest, till he have finished the thing.] Naomi her reason to perswade Ruth to rest, and not to let her thoughts trouble her, nor to feare by delay to bee deceived of her expectation; because Boaz would not rest, till hee himselfe had done what she desireth. An approved<sup>348</sup> truth of a man in one thing, may make certaine the truth of his word in another. It is equitie and charity to hope well, where wee have good prooffe of a mans faithfulness: and this is true credit, when a mans word is become of that force and validitie, as it maketh another to beleewe him without doubting. Such was Boaz his credit with Naomi: and this is it which likewise shee would, and doth perswade Ruth unto. This is the credit which wee must labour for, and which wee may attaine unto, if wee feare God, and be faithfull to him (for false to God, will prove faithlesse to man) if we bee discreet and wise in our words, to know what wee promise, before wee make it; if wee care to keepe ever our word in [p. 335] the least thing; if we hate lying, and such as doe make lies, we shall procure credit to our word.<sup>349</sup> And heere let such as find men*

<sup>345</sup> The correct reference is probably Isa. 40.31.

<sup>346</sup> Specifically, verse 63.

<sup>347</sup> Whereas Lavater chooses to interpret Naomi's instruction as indicating that she told Ruth to stay at home because she did not want her to spread the story (Lavater 110v-111r), Bernard rather draws upon and develops Topsell's observation that Naomi is exemplary for parents in that she teaches them to comfort children by exhorting them always to depend on the leisure of God (Topsell 203).

<sup>348</sup> 'approved': 'Proved or established by experience, tried, tested.' (OEDO).

<sup>349</sup> In attributing to Boaz credit (and recognising that this favoured a good outcome of Naomi's plan) and in discussing credit, Bernard especially follows Lavater (Lavater 111r-112r), although Topsell also observes that Ruth's cause greatly concerned Boaz's credit, and later expands on this (Topsell

carefull of their word, be like *Naomi*, in trusting and not wronging them, by calling their word into question without cause at any time, when they are knowne to have ever approved themselves for honest men: for what greater injury can be offred to an honest man ever meaning well, and carefull to keepe his word, then to bee suspected of the breach of his word unjustly? A true-hearted man taketh that injurie very tenderly: and therefore let men beware of giving offence in this kind, by entertaining unjust and uncharitable thoughts towards such as deserve it not.

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203-4). However, Bernard defines credit only in terms of having one's word believed without doubt, whereas Lavater defines it more broadly. Lavater observes that credit not only means a man's word would not be doubted but also that such a man will be obeyed by others, his counsel will be received by others, and his judgement will be valued. He therefore equates credit with estimation. Topsell develops this interpretation insofar as he claims that Boaz's habitual diligence caused Naomi to say he would not rest until he had finished the matter. He urges men in authority to imitate Boaz in applying faithful diligence to the cause of the poor as well as the rich, using Lavater's example of Job, esteemed by all men, to stress this point further. Thus, Boaz's credit is variously interpreted by Lavater and Topsell, who indicate the benefits of the forms of credit they recognise for their own society. Bernard's emphasis in defining credit means that his discussion here is an extension of his earlier discussions on oaths, speaking the truth, and keeping one's word (97-100, 312-14, 157-9, 298-9, 330-1, 294, 311-12, 329). Although Boaz made an oath to Ruth, the present passage does not mention it, and this would reinforce the impression that Bernard, although he endorsed oaths, may have believed that they were contrary to Matt. 5.37 and that truthfulness could be maintained without them. Bernard follows his depiction of credit with an exhortation not to doubt men's word without cause because this gives offence. This is in contrast to Lavater's rejection of those who complain they have no credit; for Lavater, such people have only themselves to blame since they have not done as they ought to have.

CHAPTER IV.<sup>1</sup>

This Chapter is the last of the Booke, and the last part of the Historie: for the first sheweth how *Ruth* came to Bethlehem; the second, how she behaved herselfe when she came there: the third, her contract with *Boaz*. And this, the solemnization of the marriage: where is declared what went before, and how it was effected; then the marriage it selfe, and the great applause of the people and Elders thereto. Thirdly, the happy issue thereof in the conception and birth of *Obed*. And lastly, a Genealogie from *Pharez* unto *David*, the King and Prophet of Israel, and the [p. 336] type<sup>2</sup> of Jesus Christ, who according to the flesh sprung from his loynes.

Verse 1. *Then Boaz went up to the gate, and sate him downe there: and behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spake, came by, unto whom he said, Ho, such a one: turne aside, sit downe heere. And he turned aside and sate downe.*

*Boaz* prosecuteth the ma[t]ter intended: and here is shewed, when, where, how, and with whom hee had to doe about it. Before I come to the words, note generally, that though both *Naomi* and *Ruth* had tasted of a poore and low estate, yet were they now exalted and greatly comforted, so as now no more *Marah*, but, as before, *Naomi*: for *after humiliation, in time followes exaltation, after sowre sweet, and after mourning joy. Many are the troubles of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth them out of all* <Ps. 126.5-6>. Israel may go into bondage in Egypt, but they shal returne

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<sup>1</sup> In the 1628 edition the variant, IIII, is put here.

<sup>2</sup> In applying the term type to David here, as he later does on pp. 470, 471 and 472, Bernard makes a limited use of the allegorical interpretation which is characteristic of medieval Christian commentaries on the Book of Ruth. See the Introduction section 4.2.2.

triumphing. *Joseph* shall be tried, before he stand before *Pharaoh*; and *David*, before he be settled in his Throne; and *Moses*, before hee bee the Princely Leader of the Israelites: and when thus they have tasted of the sowre, assure themselves they shall feelee the sweete with joy, as both *Naomi* and *Ruth* doe heere: for the Lord will at length set up on high those that be low, that those which mourne, may be exalted in safety <Job 5.11>. The Lord will humble his, to make them see themselves, to try their love, their patience and faith, and to fit them for his [p. 337] blessings, that they may know how well to use them, before they enjoy them; and then will hee afford them their hearts desire, and make them merry and glad with the joy of his countenance.<sup>3</sup> Therefore after humiliation look for exaltation: this will worke comfort under the crosse, and make us patiently awaite the time of our deliverance.

*Then went Boaz.*] That is, that morning, not deferring what he had promised, Chapter 3.11,<sup>4</sup> 13,<sup>5</sup> where I spoke of the keeping of his word, which here he accomplished. See there this truth, that *an honest man will bee carefull to keepe his word*: which here I will no farther insist upon.<sup>6</sup> Note further, that *what is done with the heart, is done cheerefully and speedily*. *Boaz* goeth about this without delay; yea so did *Abraham* in a matter of rare obedience, yea he rose up betimes earely in the morning to sacrifice his sonne <Gen. 22<sup>7</sup>>: for what the heart is wonne unto, there the whole man is set on worke; if *Sichems* heart cleave to *Dinah*, he will not deferre the matter, to bee circumcized, that he may enjoy the desire of the heart <Gen. 34.3, 19>. By this may we discover whether the heart goe with a businesse; if it be done

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<sup>3</sup> See Ps. 89.15: 'Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance.' (AV)

<sup>4</sup> See p. 294.

<sup>5</sup> See p. 311.

<sup>6</sup> See also pp. 329, 334-5.

<sup>7</sup> Specifically, verse 3.

cheerefully and speedily, the heart is with it; if but slowly, and without alacrity, the heart is absent, as in many which come so to the Church, and being come, sit as dead, without any livenesse, because their hearts are elsewhere.

*Unto the gate.] The Gate was the place of judgement*, as many places in Scripture shew <Gen. 34.20; Deut. 17.5 and 21.19 and 22.15, 24 and 25.7;<sup>8</sup> Prov. 31.23; Josh. 20.4; Job 29.7>. Now [p. 338] why it was there, these may bee the reasons. First, for easie accesse of all sorts, as well strangers as Inhabitants to the place of justice, from which none are to be kept backe. In open places is the more roome. Secondly, for the better manifestation of justice in the sight and hearing of all, which taketh away suspition of injustice. Thirdly, for the preventing of thronging by the concourse of<sup>9</sup> people, not wholesome, and sometime dangerous in those hoat countries. Fourthly, that such as passed to and fro, might bee called into the businesse, either as witnesses, or parties sometime, as it fell out in this Session here with the kinsman comming at unawares. Fiftly, because the gates be the strength and munition of the Citie: now, there for Magistrates to sit, doth more grace their authority, who sit there as Commanders in the place, able to command the whole Towne. Sixtly and lastly, to put all that enter into the City, in mind of well-doing, and to take heed of evill. These bee my conjectures: but whatsoever the reason was, this may wee learne, that *publicke causes are for publicke places, and there to bee determined of*: for in such cases the Lord commandeth to goe up to the gate of the Citie <Deut. 21.19 and 22.15 and 17.5 and 25.7; Gen. 34.20>; as also it was the manner of the Heathen thereabouts, so to doe. It befitteth the cause, it preventeth

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<sup>8</sup> This verse is part of the levirate law, and states how the widow was to complain to the elders if her husband's brother refused to marry her. Bernard addresses the difference between the disgrace of the husband's brother should he not comply subsequently stated in the levirate law (verses 9-10) and the procedure in Ruth 4.8 on p. 394.

<sup>9</sup> A repetition of the word 'of' in the 1628 edition has been omitted.

suspicion of sinister dealing in private; and publicke places doe grace more authority, then private meetings. And therefore this course is to be approved, and the private hearing of publicke businesses, as in criminall causes, [p. 339] is against the Apostles Canon:<sup>10</sup> and hereby great evils fall out; justice is p[er]verted, and sinne often unpunished, the offenders let goe for gaine, who should bee made examples, that other might heare and feare <Deut. 21.21<sup>11</sup>>.<sup>12</sup>

*And sate him downe there.*] Seates were prepared before, for him and the rest, as the common place of justice: which sitting downe of him in the publicke place of justice, sheweth that he was a Judge and a man of authority, and the best also in the Assembly, because he tooke the first place.<sup>13</sup> Note briefly, First, that *sitting is the*

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<sup>10</sup> See 1 Tim. 5.20.

<sup>11</sup> According to verse 20, the parents will say to the elders, ‘our son *is* stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; *he is* a glutton, and a drunkard’. The offender is then stoned to death. It is not clear how far Bernard actually endorses this brutal punishment. Bernard’s attention was evidently drawn to the case by Topsell. Bernard later cites Deut. 21.18 as illustrating obstinate children as a matter coming before the elders (351). In doing so, he follows Topsell, who cites the case of the obstinate son as an example demonstrating that the city gates in ancient times were public places of judgement (Topsell 206). Bernard may have noted from the biblical passage to which his attention had been drawn the importance of making examples of offenders without considering whether the offence of the son merited his punishment.

<sup>12</sup> Here, Bernard emphasises the significance of the city gates being the place of judgement in Old Testament times. The lesson for his own society is that public causes are to be dealt with in public places. Lavater only observes that in his time public judgements, especially of life and death, are exercised openly in many places (113v). However, Topsell evidently provides the basis of Bernard’s lesson for he concludes from the ancient arrangement that it is an injury in matters of trial, equity and justice for public faults to be judged privately. He cites 1 Tim. 5.20, to which Bernard alludes. Topsell too draws attention to the evils resulting from offences being handled privately. This indicates that he has reservations about his approval of court procedures in his own society (Topsell 206-7). Topsell’s comments correspond with those of the medieval Christian commentators, Hugh of St. Cher (ca. 1200-1263) and Nicholas of Lyra (ca. 1270-1340). Hugh observes that the judges were ordered to sit in the gate (Deut. 16.18) so as to be available to all people, and that they judged openly, ‘unlike those today who keep themselves hidden’ (MET 44). Nicholas does not criticise his own society but merely notes that the gate was open to all people with speed and ease (MET 63). More lessons follow in Bernard’s commentary from the legal arrangements in primitive biblical society. As will be noted, Bernard’s admiration of the early arrangements can be seen in some instances to derive from Lavater and Topsell. However, Bernard also advocates further elements, and his discussion is more extensive. For an overview, see the Introduction section 3.

<sup>13</sup> In concluding that Boaz was the best judge in the assembly, Bernard is probably drawing on Lavater’s observation that Boaz sat as a chief judge in the gate, according to the Jewish view that he was the judge Ibsan (Lavater 113r). Lavater, in turn, probably follows Nicholas of Lyra, who comments that Boaz sat as if he was the principal judge, according to the Jewish view that he was Abesan (MET 63). Hugh of St. Cher also identifies Boaz as Abesan, although he favours the view that Eli judged in the time of Elimelech ( MET 41). The Jewish view that Ibzan was Boaz occurs in

*gravest gesture for Judges and Magistrates in places of judgement*; so ever set out, Prov. 31.23; Matt. 19.28; Rev. 20.4, and so ever used in those parts, and likewise with us: which therefore is to bee observed for the better setting forth of their authority, which they should mind to grace by all meanes in the peoples eyes, for more reverence sake. Secondly, that *God so guideth by his providence these worldly estates, that ever some are better men in place and dignitie then other some*: such a one was *Job* <Job 1.1 and 29.7-9>, and so *Boaz* heere, for the preservation of peace in Church and Common-wealth: which hand of God wee are to prayse him for, and to pray unto him to uphold this inequality of persons: for else what would follow but disorder and confusion, and every man would doe what hee list<sup>14</sup> <Judg. 17.6 and 18.1>. See this with our selves, when men of equality meet, and have light occasions offered: Oh how doe they scornefully behave themselves one to another! Thirdly, that *men of place according to [p. 340] their dignitie, may take their place, without staine of pride*: for *Boaz* doth it: it is also their right, and it preserveth order, and that dignitie which God hath given them. Therefore may they take their place, yet so, as they be humble, and not hautilly-minded, neither proudly contend for it, and so disturbe publicke peace, which should ever bee most deare to every one, especially to men in authority. If men may take their place, then such are blame-worthy, which with an envious eye find fault with any for so doing: and they also doe amisse, which out of too great humility (to speake but so of it) doe lose their due place, and therewithall so much of due respect unto their person and degree, yeelding their place to the lesse worthy, and so lift up the other in pride, and make themselves of

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the Talmud (BJE 110, note 1) and is found in Rashi (BJE 102) and David Qimhi (BJE 149). It also occurs in the Targum of Ruth, which alludes to Boaz as 'the judge of judges' (BTR 18). Salmon ben Yeroham also mentions the possibility that Ibzan was the judge at the time of the story (BJE 50).

<sup>14</sup> 'list': 'To wish, desire, like, choose.' (OEDO).



lesse esteeme. But as there be some such so lowly-minded, so are there others too highly-conceited of themselves, who will take place of their betters, assuming to themselves more then they deserve: this is pride and hatefull arrogancie.<sup>15</sup>

*And behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spake, came by <Chapter 3.12-13>.]*

This word of attention, *Behold*, calleth the Reader to a remarkeable thing, and to an especiall providence of God, in bringing this kinsman thus hither; not as yet called, or sent for. If hee had beene sent for, or called, and so come of purpose, it seemeth, the Holy Ghost would not have said, *Behold*. This then was the guiding hand of God, to further this match. Whence wee doe learne, that *when God will prosper a businesse, his [p. 341] providence will apparantly bee seene in that businesse, and in the successe thereof*, as you may see before in *Boaz* his comming into the field, and *Ruths* lighting upon his Reapers <Chapter 2<sup>16</sup>>; so in *Abrahams* servant guided to *Labans* house, and in *Rebecca*, her comming out whilest he prayed standing by the Well, and shee performing every thing according as he had prayed immediatly before <Gen. 24<sup>17</sup>>. Such a providence was seene in the Midianites comming by, to goe into Egypt, while *Joseph* lay in the pit that he might be sold to them, that they might carry him into Egypt, as God had determined <Gen. 37<sup>18</sup>>; the like providence in *Moses* preservation by *Pharaohs* daughter, is very apparent <Exod. 2<sup>19</sup>>: for Gods

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<sup>15</sup> In this exposition, Bernard demonstrates particularly forcefully his emphasis on hierarchy in society (see the Introduction section 3). He here makes a similar argument to the one he made in his discussion of apparel in chapter 3, regarding dressing in a way that subverts the social hierarchy (260). This argument in chapter 3 follows Topsell (*Topsell* 167, 168). Bernard's qualified use of the word 'humility' in the present passage to explain why some lose their rightful place is a less severe explanation than he employs on p. 260. There, he attributes baseness to public persons who do not dress according to their place. This reflects Topsell's criticism of covetous persons who wear base apparel and of those who spend on their bellies rather than on clothing (*Topsell* 168).

<sup>16</sup> See Bernard's reference to providence in his exposition of verses 4 and 3, on pp. 142-3 and 138, 140-1. Bernard's concern with providence is discussed in the Introduction section 3.

<sup>17</sup> Specifically, verses 27, 12-20.

<sup>18</sup> Specifically, verses 25-28.

<sup>19</sup> Specifically, verses 1-10.

providence is his guiding hand to effect what he hath decreed; hee willeth, and then his providence worketh the same. Which if wee will observe, we may easily see in our courses,<sup>20</sup> and say, Behold, the providence of God, and by wel marking the same, we would be moved greatly to praise God, wee would not murmur against crosses, wee would commit our wayes unto him, and waite on his good pleasure with patience in all our affaires, knowing this certainly, that if hee hath determined a thing, it shall come to passe, though in mans reason most unlikely.

*Unto whom he said, Ho, such a one, etcetera.*] This kinsman was of worth, it appeareth by this, that hee sate next *Boaz*, before the ten Elders; that he was able to redeeme land so soone after ten yeeres dearth; that hee regarded so much the marring of his owne inheritance; and lastly, be- [p. 342] cause he was of the same family of *Elimelech*, and in birth before *Boaz*, yet by place it may seeme that *Boaz* was his better; though *Boaz* would not stand upon his greatnesse and power with him, but he would proceed in this businesse according to equity and right, respecting so himselfe, as yet hee would not wrong another, but doe what was most meet to be done; teaching this, that *a godly man, a just man, will not doe what hee may by his power, but what he ought by right.* Such a one was *Nehemiah* and *Abraham*: who would not doe according to that which was in their hand, but what was agreeable to justice, and fit for them to doe <Neh. 5.15; Gen. 14.22-3>: *Nehemiah* giveth the reason, because he feared God. This was it also that made *Joseph* so to deale with his brethren, and not according to his power and their deserts.<sup>21</sup> This is it which made *Job* not to contemne his servant; for he knew his servant, as well as himselfe to be the Lords.<sup>22</sup> Oh then let men of power imitate these men of might! it will argue that they also

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<sup>20</sup> ‘course’: ‘Life viewed as a race that is run; career.’ (OEDO).

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, Gen. 42.18.

<sup>22</sup> See Job 31.13-15.

feare God <Prov. 14.2>: and upright and just dealing is more acceptable to God, than sacrifices <Prov. 21.3>. Men must not be like *Nimrods* nor *Sauls*, to make their lusts a law, and their power the bounds of their practise.<sup>23</sup> Remember *Jezabel*, who tooke by force and fraud *Naboths* Vineyard, but shee at length dearely paid for the same <1 Kings 21.7>. Note hence againe, that *one not before another by birth, may bee his better by authority*, as *Boaz* was heere; so *Moses* before *Aaron*; *Joseph* before his brethren, and *David* before his: for God advanceth not men as they be in birth, [p. 343] but as his good pleasure is. And therefore let the Elder submit to the yonger, if God please to have it so; and men descended of Nobles, submit to meane men advanced by God, and that without envie or disdayne: for God fetcheth beggars from the dung-hill, to set them among Princes <1 Sam. 2<sup>24</sup>>: promotion is not from East or West, but from his hand: therefore must wee rest contented. Thirdly note, that *a man according to his authority, may speake to another with authority, though in some respect the same be his better*, as the kinsman is here by birth, to whom *Boaz* yet thus speaketh. But why did hee not name him? *Boaz* did name, as these words (*Such a one*) doe shew: but the Penman of the Spirit passeth him by, either as not materiall, or rather for that hee was a worldling, loving land better than Gods Law; desiring the one, but not caring to obey the other <Verses 4, 6>. Hereby giving us to know, that *hee which loveth more the world, and his owne outward estate, than the Law and*

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<sup>23</sup> In Gen. 10.8 Nimrod, the son of Cush (earlier stated to be a son of Ham, a son of Noah) is said to be 'a mighty one in the earth' (AV). Bernard probably has in mind Josephus's account of Nimrod. According to Josephus, Nimrod incited the other descendants of Noah to disobey and distrust God's command to send out colonies. Rather, they attributed their prosperity to their own power. Nimrod was tyrannical and sought to stop men fearing God by making them dependent on his own power. He instigated the building of the Tower of Babel with the intention of its being so high that God would not be able to flood the world again (Josephus [Whiston] [Book 1 Section 4] 7).

Saul exhibits lust or uncontrolled passion on a number of occasions. He throws a javelin at David, 1 Sam. 18.10-11 and also at Jonathan, 1 Sam. 20.30-4. Again, he loses his temper and orders the slaughter of the priests of Nob, 1 Sam. 22.17-19.

<sup>24</sup> Verses 8 and 36 are particularly relevant.

*Word of God, is worthy to have no name in Gods Booke, in the Booke of Life.*<sup>25</sup>

Therefore take heed and beware of covetousnesse; Old Father *Latimers*<sup>26</sup> Text.

*Turne aside, sit downe here.] Boaz* willeth him to set aside his private busines for this publike work, and to sit downe to heare the matter: the matter concerned them both, and *Boaz* doth call him into the Court and place of judgement about it. Whence note, that *it is lawfull upon just cause, for one man to call another into publicke places of justice, to cleare mens rights*: for this cause God himselfe [p. 344] appointed amongst his people publicke Courts of justice, gave them Lawes to judge by, and allowed men to take the benefit thereof <Exod. 22.8>: and godly men have sate as Judges, as *Moses, David* and others <Exod. 18.16; 1 Chron. 18.14>: for without this, some controversies cannot bee ended, so perverse and partiall are many

<sup>25</sup> Bernard evidently takes up the issue of the nearer kinsman's not being named from Lavater, as will be shown. Lavater, in turn, it will be seen, appears to allude to the medieval Jewish commentators (although Nicholas of Lyra, from whom Lavater frequently obtains his references to the Jews, does not allude to them on this occasion, MET 63). With Lavater and Bernard the issue acquires the significance that these commentators associate it with the nearer kinsman's being covetous. Bernard takes this point to great lengths, for he makes extended discussions on the subject of worldlings and covetousness (362-4, 369-70, 378-80, 381, 382-5, 386-7, 392). This combines with his perception that there is an absence of brotherly love among men (361) to inform his evident view that the godly are surrounded by the ungodly, which is thus expressed with particular force in chapter 4. The sources of Bernard's comments in this passage – Lavater and the medieval Jewish commentaries – establish the questions at issue. Lavater draws attention to the Hebrew words, 'Almoni Peloni' in Boaz's reported speech, but declares that they signify nothing but replace a proper name. He mentions the view that the nearer kinsman's name was concealed because he did not deserve to be remembered by good men because he would not obey the levirate law (113r-113v). This view evidently is that of Rashi (BJE 109). Rashi also had a preoccupation, which he shared with the other medieval Jewish commentators, with the meaning of the Hebrew words (Salmon ben Yeroham, BJE 78; Rashi, BJE 109; the Anonymous Rabbi, who applied the words to the matter to be raised rather than to the nearer kinsman, BJE 128; Abraham ibn Ezra, BJE 143; David Qimhi, BJE 150). The Targum of Ruth also glosses the words (BTR 29). The fact that Lavater, and subsequently Bernard, do not address the language question to the extent that the Jewish commentators do reflects their relative lack of Hebrew scholarship. However, Lavater's mention of the Hebrew words indicates the connection of his interpretations with those of the Jews. Lavater, later in his exposition of verses 1-4, observes that the nearer kinsman seemed to be covetous, crafty and contentious (117r). He explains, in his exposition of verse 6, that the law pleased the nearer kinsman only in so far as it was profitable to him (127v). According to Lavater, many people in his own society are like the nearer kinsman (128r-129r). Bernard builds on the tradition of commentary including Lavater to open up a criticism of his own society.

<sup>26</sup> Hugh Latimer (c. 1485-1555). Latimer's sermons recur frequently to the sin of covetousness, which marred the achievements of the Reformation. See Hugh Latimer, Selected Sermons of Hugh Latimer. A sermon against covetousness is included here, pp. 138-57, and the theme is further illustrated by a denunciation of London, pp. 33-5.

in their owne cause. Which confuteth the Anabaptists, who allow not of Magistrates, and this course of justice in ending controversies:<sup>27</sup> yet on the other side albeit men may sue one another, it must not be for every trifle; it must not be in revenge, malice, and with desire to hurt my neighbour: it must bee the last remedie: and when men goe to Law, they must doe it in love, use the Law as a Judge and Moderator, and therefore must they chuse the most honest Lawyers, which will not sell their tongues, and abuse their wits for gaine: they are to beware of bribing any, they must not use circumventions, but bee content peaceably and lovingly to let the equity of the Law decyde the matter, and therein quietly rest.

*And he turned aside, and sate downe.*] Though this man was one of some worth among them, and a worldly man too, yet hee for this publicke businesse, and for to shew his obedience to authority, turneth aside from his private affaires, and doth sit downe, as *Boaz* did will him. Whence note, First, that *when any are called to publicke businesses, private are to be laid aside for the time, to further the publicke*, as this man doth here, and as all good members of a Common-wealth should do, [p. 345] for that publicke actions, and publicke causes should bee more neere and deare to us than private: for in publicke things there is a respect unto the private, which is more safe in the safety of that which is publicke. Therefore such as doe neglect wholly publicke wel-fare, and attend onely to the private good of their owne estate, they doe amisse, and even so, as if a member of the body should see to it selfe, and neglect the body, which is the way at length to bring ruine upon it selfe, which it seekes to prevent.<sup>28</sup> This reproveth such as being able and fit men for publicke

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<sup>27</sup> Again, Bernard engages with the Anabaptists. He here points out the biblically illustrated necessity for the legal system, and emphasises that people must use it in a responsible way. See the Introduction section 3.

<sup>28</sup> See 1 Cor. 12.21-6. Bernard again uses the strategy of pointing out the benefits for people should they adopt the behaviour he is advocating.

businesses, doe labour yet by all meanes to avoid them. As also much more such as being called to publicke authority, yea and bound by oath to the same, doe neverthelesse live as if no such duty were imposed upon them, and are wholly taken up with the thoughts of their owne private and houshold affaires. This so great neglect of that which is publicke, is no small detriment to to the Common-weale; this great care of every man for himselfe and for his owne private, and little or rather none for the publicke, is the cause of so great, and so many evils every where among men. Secondly, that *men are to yeeld readily to lawfull authority commanding, whatsoever worth they be of, which are so commanded*. Men must bee like the Israelites, and do as they said they would doe to *Josua*, even to obey readily in all things, and so to uphold his authority, as also they would oppose themselves against such as would not obey <Josh. 1.16-18>. *David* was very obedient unto *Saul*, albeit hee [p. 346] was anointed himselfe, hee stood not upon his right, but waited the Lords time, and was willingly obedient.<sup>29</sup> Thus should wee be to lawfull authority, as the Apostle exhorteth, and that by many reasons, in the Epistle to the Romanes <Rom. 13.1, 4;<sup>30</sup> Tit. 3.1>, though in those times the Kings and Governors were Heathen and bloody persecutours. This condemneth those which are like *Corah* and his Companie; and like *Absalom* and his associats in conspiracie, which are so farre from obedience, as they rise up in open Rebellion against lawfull authority. Such were the counterfeit Catholicks; and such be they ever in heart, though not alway in action, in this our Soveraignes Dominions.<sup>31</sup> This also checketh those, which, though they hate treason and rebellion, and will not disobey supreme authority, yet

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<sup>29</sup> See 1 Sam. 24 and 1 Sam. 26, where Saul is twice spared by David when he could have killed him.

<sup>30</sup> Verses 1-7 are relevant.

<sup>31</sup> This sentence illustrates the prevailing attitude to Roman Catholics, that their very religion made them potential traitors.

will despise inferiour officers: but they are commanded the contrary, as the Apostle *Peter* teacheth <1 Pet. 2.13<sup>32</sup>>: for not onely the King, as Supreme, but also such as be sent of him, are to bee obeyed of conscience for the Lords sake.

Verse 2. *And hee tooke ten men of the Elders of the Citie, and said, Sit yee downe heere. And they sate downe.*

Here is set downe the Assistants in this businesse: how many, what they were, whence taken, and their sitting downe in the place of Judgement with *Boaz* and the Kinsman, after that *Boaz* had willed them so to doe.

[p. 347] *And he tooke ten men.*] The Elders and people were gathered together, it may seeme, before unto the Gate: whether it was that they were especially sent for; or that they hearing that *Boaz* was gone up to the Gate of the Citie, and so came voluntarily (as it was perhaps their manner so to doe, when they heard of any to goe up to the place of Judgement) it is not certaine; but the Elders were there, and the people also, verse the 11, and of the Elders hee chose onely ten, to sit in the place of Judgement: why onely ten is no reason given; it may be, the number was chosen according to the ten yeeres of *Naomi* her absence in Moab <Chapter 1.4>, or according to the number of the ten Commandements, to put them in mind of their duety; or for what else, I will not further conjecture: it was a number thought fit in this case, for the hearing and determining of the matter. This wee note, in *Boaz* taking of these men, men of authority, that *publicke causes are to bee handled before publicke persons, and of them a competent*<sup>33</sup> *number for the determining thereof*

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<sup>32</sup> Verse 14 is also relevant.

<sup>33</sup> 'competent': 'Suitable, adequate, or sufficient, in amount or extent.' (OEDO).

<Deut. 25.7; Josh. 20.4>: for therefore are such appointed, publicke persons for publicke causes; and by such as have authority to end matters, the thing in hand is more firmly established: and if there have beene before, or might after contention arise, the same hereby is cut off and prevented. And therefore in such cases let such fit persons and so many bee Judges, as may by their authority end businesses betweene one an[o]ther.<sup>34</sup>

*Of the Elders.*] Here I will note, First, what [p. 348] Elders were. Secondly, of whom chosen. Thirdly, of what sort of persons. Fourthly, why set over the people. And lastly, why called Elders. For the first, Elders were men of authority, distinguished from the people <1 Kings 20.7-8>, and joyned with others, so as it is said, the *Princes and Elders*, Ezra 10.8; Judg. 8.6, 14, 16, *Judges and Elders*, Deut. 21.2, *Elders and Officers*, Num. 11.16, under this name were the chiefe in the Common-wealth comprehended, both out of Israel, Josh. 9.11; Num. 22.7, and in Israel, as in many places it fully appeareth <2 Chron. 5.2; Ezra 5.9-10; 1 Sam. 15.30; 2 Sam. 3.17 and 5.3 and 17.15; Exod. 4.29 and 17.5 and 24.1>: and therefore Princes are included in Elders, Judg. 8.6, 14, 16, and Rulers and Elders made one, Ezra 5.9-10 and 6.7-8. The chiefe of the Kings house were called Elders, 2 Sam. 12.17, and such as in every city bare rule, Deut. 21.3, 19-20, for those which were appointed in every city to be Judges and Officers in Deut. 16.18 are every where after called by the name of the Elders of the city, Deut. 21.20 and 22.15, 18.<sup>35</sup> Thus the Lord ordeined Governors to rule his people. For the second, they were chosen by the people, and admitted by *Moses*, as himselfe in a place witnesseth <Deut. 1.13>,

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<sup>34</sup> Bernard derives a lesson further to his earlier lesson from verse 1 (p. 338) that public causes should be dealt with in public places. Here, he notes the importance of judges of public causes being of an appropriate number and sufficiently authoritative to determine the outcome. Topsell also notes the necessity of judges having appropriate authority (207-8).

<sup>35</sup> Verses 15-21 are relevant.



which was to them a great libertie and freedome. For the third, they were of the best, able and fittest men, thus to be qualified, first, to bee men of wisdom and understanding <Exod. 18.21, See Z[e]pper,<sup>36</sup> de Lege Mosaica, liber 3, caput 9,<sup>37</sup> Deut. 1.13; 2 Chron. 19.11>, and not childish and simple persons; for that is a punishment upon the people, to have such over them <Isa. 3.4>. Secondly, to be good men, religious, and fearing God <2 Sam. 23.3; 2 Chron. 19.7; Exod. 18.21>: for such should rule over men, as have conscience towards God, under whom, and for whose glory [p. 349] they are to rule, and with those the Lord will be, 2 Chron. 19.11. Thirdly, to be men of truth, as *Jethro* adviseth <Exod. 18.21>, that is, true men, as *Josephs* brethren call themselves <Gen. 42.11>; such as are that which they seeme to bee, not pretending one thing, and intending another, but in the course of justice doe follow the truth of the cause, as the truth thereof shall appeare unto them. Fourthly, to bee men hating covetousnesse;<sup>38</sup> else will they take bribes, and love dishonest gaine, and pervert justice <Deut. 16.19; Prov. 1.19; Ezek. 22.27; 1 Sam. 8.3>. Fifthly, to be knowne men in these things, Deut. 1.13. When such are set over a people, let us praise God and rejoyce: where such bee wanting, pray to God to send them: and where the contrary be, lament and bewaile the estate of such a people. Touching the fourth, why they bee set over a people? For the praise of the good, and the punishment of the bad <1 Pet. 2.13-14>, and to rule in justice and in judgement <2 Chron. 9.8>, and to governe the people: for that we bee all of a rebellious nature, since the fall of *Adam*. Now, to governe well, Magistrates and men in authority must doe two things: First, they must find out offences, they must enquire, and search out

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<sup>36</sup> The 1628 edition has 'Zipper' rather than 'Zepper'.

<sup>37</sup> The reference is to Wilhelm Zepper, *Legum Mosaicarum Forensium Explanatio* [Explanation of Mosaic public laws] (1604). Book 3 chapter 9 (pp. 218-28) deals with the qualities necessary in a ruler, wisdom and strength of mind and body.

<sup>38</sup> Bernard again alludes to Exod. 18.21.

the same diligently <Deut. 13.12;<sup>39</sup> Job 29.16; Deut. 17.4>: for one rebellious *Jonah* may hazard many mens lives, and the sinking of the ship; so one *Achan* may weaken a whole Armie: and therefore it is necessary to seeke them out, that sinne may be punished, and Gods wrath appeased <Jon. 1; Josh. 7>.<sup>40</sup> Secondly, they must justly proceed against offences, and that thus: first, they must set Gods feare before them, as *Jehoshaphat* exhorts <2 Chron. 19.7>. Secondly, they must doe it in the spirit [p. 350] of courage, not fearing the face of any, though many, though mightie <Deut. 1.17; 2 Chron. 19.11; Job 29.17 and 31.34>. Thirdly, they must deale equally without respect of person, hearing the small, as well as the great, not wresting judgement, but judge the people with just judgement <Deut. 1.17 and 16.18-19>. For the last, why called Elders ? It may be, they were chosen of the ancient of the people, or for the most part of such: for the Hebrew word here commeth of the Verbe which signifieth to bee waxen old <zaken>: and the Assembly of the Elders is called the *Synedrion* of the old men, by the Grecians <synedrion geronto<sup>41</sup>n>; and of these is it most meet that Judges and Magistrates be chosen: first, for their wisdom and experience, though wisdom doth not alwaies abide with the aged <Job 32.9>. Secondly, for that such give counsell with more mature deliberation, and have not the force of affection to over-sway them as youth hath, which therefore is rash, and giveth often ill counsell; of which *Rehoboam* tasted and repented. Thirdly, for the gravitie of their countenance, which giveth grace and credit to their authority, and so are not so subject to contempt, as the young in yeeres be: for the hoarie head is to bee honoured <Lev. 19.32>, and age is a Crowne of glory, if it be found in the way of

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<sup>39</sup> The correct reference is Deut. 13.14.

<sup>40</sup> Bernard indicates that it could be in the interests of a community for its officials to take action against any amongst the community who can be perceived to contravene divine law, since God's punishments may not be restricted to the offender.

<sup>41</sup> This is a long 'o', the Greek letter 'omega'.

righteousnes <Prov. 16.31>. Fourthly, because they have a strong motive to perswade them to upright dealing, even their old age and the nighnesse of death. This made some Heathen to be upright and stout against the mightie <*Plutarch liber, An seni sit gerenda Respublica*,<sup>42</sup> *Laertius, Tullius, de senectute, Valerius Maximus*.<sup>43</sup>>, as *Solon* against *Pisistratus*; and *Cecilius* against *Caesar*.<sup>44</sup> the former said, his old age made him so to withstand the attempts of the Tyrant; and the latter [p. 351] told his friends, that his old age, and being also childlesse, made him dare to speake so roundly and freely against *Cæsar*. We see then what reason there is, that the Governours should bee ancient men, such as well might bee called Elders, not onely for authority, but for their yeeres and gravitie.<sup>45</sup>

*Of the Citie.*] To wit, of Bethlehem: for in every Citie by Gods appointment there were Officers and Judges, the Elders of the people <Deut. 16.18; Ezra 10.14; 2 Chron. 19.5>: how many were in every citie is not certaine: in this, besides *Boaz* and the Kinsman, were ten. And it is said *tenne of them*, implying more. In Succoth were Princes and Elders threescore and seventeene <Judg. 8<sup>46</sup>>. It may seeme, that the number of them was either greater or lesser, according to the populousnesse of the Inhabitants, and largenesse of the Cities: onely in Jerusalem was the great *Synedrion*<sup>47</sup> consisting of the Seventie two Elders constantly. In every City were

<sup>42</sup> 'Whether old men should take part in political affairs'.

<sup>43</sup> Bernard refers to: Plutarch, *Moralia*, vol. 10 pp. 136-7; Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* pp. 48-51; M.T. Cicero (Tullius), *On Old Age* pp. 32-3; Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Doings and Sayings*, vol. 1 pp. 486-7, vol. 2 pp. 246-7.

<sup>44</sup> Bernard's argument derives from Lavater, according to whom Julius Caesar is referred to. Lavater observes that Valerius Maximus writes of 'Cesselius' regarding Caesar (*Lavater* 114r-114v). However, it has not been possible to find the story of Caecilius and Caesar, as related by Lavater and Bernard, in *Memorable Doings and Sayings*.

<sup>45</sup> Lavater gives reasons why old men were mostly chosen for the Senate by the Greeks (114r-114v). Bernard employs essentially the same reasons in the lesson for his own society that judges and magistrates should be elderly. See the Introduction section 3.

<sup>46</sup> Specifically, verse 14.

<sup>47</sup> 'synedrion': 'A judicial or representative assembly, a council, consistory; *spec.* the Jewish sanhedrim.' 'sanhedrim': "'The name applied to the highest court of justice and supreme council at

Courts of justice, and every matter came before those Elders;<sup>48</sup> as matters concerning idolatrie, rebellion, and obstinacie of children given to ryotousnesse; also murther, adulterie, theft, and injuries offered, and slander; so matters of marriage, and sale of land, as here in this place <Deut. 17.3, 5<sup>49</sup> and 21.18<sup>50</sup> and 19.11<sup>51</sup> and 22.21, 24;<sup>52</sup> Exod. 22;<sup>53</sup> Deut. 22.14, 18<sup>54</sup>>. The punishments which they inflicted, were pecuniarie sometime, sometime beating and whipping <Deut. 22.19 and 25.2; Lev. 19.20>, and sometime death it selfe; likewise to this death were put inticers to idolatrie, and such as committed it; also a young woman that should play the whore in her fathers house; and those that committed a- [p. 352] dultery; likewise the sacrilegious person, the blasphemmer, the wizzard, and the obstinate gluttonous and drunken sonne, all were stoned <Deut. 13.10<sup>55</sup> and 17.5 and 22.21, 24;<sup>56</sup> Josh. 7;<sup>57</sup> Lev. 24.14<sup>58</sup>>. Some were to bee burnt, as the Preists daughter playing the whore,

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Jerusalem, and in a wider sense also to lower courts of justice" (W. Bacher in *Hastings' Dict. of the Bible*, s.v.); the 'Great Sanhedrim' is said to have consisted of 71 members.' (OEDO).

<sup>48</sup> Bernard's account which follows expands on Topsell's noting of three matters dealt with at city gates in scripture. The two cases mentioned by Topsell which concern judgement are also enumerated by Bernard: the obstinate son, Deut. 21.19, and the parents bringing the signs of virginity of a newly married woman whose husband accused her of not being a virgin at the time of marriage, Deut. 22.15 (Topsell 206). Bernard, by adding further examples, shows that the Bible records a comprehensive range of instances of the administration of justice. In claiming that the elders dealt with matters concerning idolatry, Bernard disagrees with Topsell, who states that the elders did not meddle in religion (Topsell 208). Bernard's view is supported by his biblical citation. By illustrating the remit of the elders in judging cases, Bernard supports the argument he goes on to make later in this passage, that the Jewish system of having many courts near the towns and villages should be adopted in his own time. Bernard and Topsell are preceded by the medieval Jewish commentator, Salmon ben Yeroham, in drawing attention to matters requiring judgement. See the Introduction section 3.

<sup>49</sup> Verse 4 is also relevant.

<sup>50</sup> Verses 19 and 20 are also relevant.

<sup>51</sup> Verse 12 is also relevant.

<sup>52</sup> It is not clear why Bernard selects only these two verses. Verses 13-24 are relevant.

<sup>53</sup> Specifically verses 8 and 9.

<sup>54</sup> Bernard cites verses from a passage which evidently is meant by his reference just cited (Deut. 22.21, 24). In doing so, he shows his capacity to use a biblical reference to reinforce more than one point – here the points of judgement of adultery and judgement of slander. This latter reference could more fully have been given as Deut. 22.13-19.

<sup>55</sup> The whole chapter is relevant, since it also orders the capital punishment of a prophet enticing people to follow other Gods (verses 1-5) and the destruction of idolatrous cities (verses 12-16).

<sup>56</sup> Verses 21-5 are relevant.

<sup>57</sup> Specifically, verses 24-6.

<sup>58</sup> For the wizard see Lev. 20.27; for the obstinate son see Deut. 21.18-21.

and the incestuous person <Lev. 21.9 and 20.14>; and this death may seeme to bee before the Law for whoredome. Some were hanged for some offences <Deut. 21.22>: but before the punishment was inflicted, and before sentence was pronounced, there was diligent enquiry of the fact, and also competent witnesses to justifie the same: for not one, but two or three witnesses were to establish a matter; and if any false witnesses were found, that was done to them, which they had though[t] to have done to another <Deut. 17.4<sup>59</sup> and 19.15, 19<sup>60</sup>>. Thus we see, how these Elders proceeded in justice, from whom there was no appeale in any matter, but in that which was too hard, and then were the parties to goe to Jerusalem unto the Priests, the Levites and Judges there, and abide that Sentence without gaine-saying, and that upon perill of their life.<sup>61</sup> From the consideration of these things afore delivered, touching superiority, and Courts of justice every where, and such a Court from which could bee no appeale; wee may observe; First, that *superioritie of some above the rest, is the ordinance of God, for the well governing of a Common-wealth*; the chiefe and best is that which is Monarchicall, when a King ruleth over the people, so he bee as *Moses* describeth, and not as *Samuel* <Deut. 17.15, 20;<sup>62</sup> 1 Sam. 8.11, 18<sup>63</sup>>: for God set first one, even *King Moses*, as he is called over the people <Deut. 33.5>,<sup>64</sup> and *Moses* prayeth that one might be [p. 353] set over the people, lest that the Israelites should bee as Sheep without a Shepheard, yea though then there were Captaines over thousands, hundreds, and tens, and the seventie Elders upon whom the Lord had put his Spirit.<sup>65</sup> Againe, we reade that the Lord saved his people by

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<sup>59</sup> Verse 6 is also relevant.

<sup>60</sup> Verses 15-19 are relevant.

<sup>61</sup> See Deut. 17.8-13 and 2 Chron. 19.8-11.

<sup>62</sup> Verses 15-20 are relevant.

<sup>63</sup> Verses 11-18 are relevant.

<sup>64</sup> Bernard is misinterpreting Deut. 33.5. This verse means that God was king over Israel (Jeshurun).

<sup>65</sup> See Num. 27.15-17. In Num. 27.15-17 Moses was asking for a successor not a king (and he was

Judges or Princes, raised up to lead them and to be Judges over them <Judg. 3 and 4 and 6>. Futhermore, when the Israelites were seated in Canaan, and that there were the seventie two Elders, also in every citie Elders, yet is it said, That every one did what seemed him good, because there was no King in Israel <Judg. 17<sup>66</sup> and 18<sup>67</sup> and 22<sup>68</sup>>. Moreover, Israel never came to bee renowned, freeing themselves from all their Enemies, and subduing them which were round about them, till they had a King over them. Lastly, it is the wisdom of nations both civill and barbarous Heathen <1 Sam. 8.5>, besides the Church of God, to allow of this kind of government, such as the Lord hath now placed over us, that so every man may not doe what he listeth: and therefore are wee to rest thankfull therewith, and praise the Name of our God. Secondly, that *in well governed Common-wealths* (like that of Israel, ordred by the wisdom of God himselfe<sup>69</sup>) *there shou[l]d be many Courts of justice, and so many, and so neere the townes and villages, that the people might have speedy recourse thither to end any cause, which might fall out among them.* In every citie in Israel, in every Tribe and city thereof, were Courts of justice <Deut. 16.16<sup>70</sup>>. In Judah were an hundred and twelve Cities, which was but a little Circuit, even so many Courts for justice and [p. 354] judgement, to which the townes and villages resorted which belonged to them, and in them, as is before noted,<sup>71</sup> were all matters handled, without

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directed by God to Joshua). Bernard is evidently equating leading with being a king, as he does when referring to judges next. See also Num. 31.14, Num. 11.16-17.

<sup>66</sup> Specifically, verse 6.

<sup>67</sup> Specifically, verse 1.

<sup>68</sup> The correct reference is 21.25.

<sup>69</sup> Bernard develops this point, which is introduced on pp. 343-4, at the end of this passage about the desirability of there being many courts. He there declares that the Jewish system of government should be imitated by all nations because it was devised by God himself (354). Evidently, Bernard, according to his Puritan values, derives from the Bible a divinely ordained model of justice which he believes would remedy the existing state of affairs if it were adopted in England. See also the Introduction section 3.

<sup>70</sup> The correct reference is Deut. 16.18.

<sup>71</sup> See pp. 351-2.

going any farther. This would prevent long journeyes, and so great expences of subjects; this would sooner bring causes to the hearing, and matters to an end: this were the way to have sinne more easily and sooner punished. The Israelites did not stay till quarter Sessions, till Assises every halfe yeere; till which time causes must rest, prisoners lye and dye in prison, or else learn such villanies there, as they will be ever the worse for, when they be delivered. The Israelites were not constrained to take long journeyes every Terme to the chiefe City of their Kingdome to try matters, as wee doe, and as wee were wont to doe, even to go much farther, to Rome from England heretofore; but all had Courts for every matter, for all offences, for controversies of every nature, hard at hand, and daily kept for any to have accesse unto. Which I thus speake of, onely not to condemne utterly our courses, but to set out the politicall estate of the Jewes; a plat-forme of government devised by God himselfe, and therefore worthy imitation of all nations, and that before any other whatsoever: for the wisdom of no lawgiver can be compared to the wisdom of this Heavenly Lawgiver. Thirdly, that *it is meet, that such a Court of justice bee in every well ordered state, whose sentence should be definitive, and with which men should rest*. So was it in Israel, from which none might decline upon paine of [p. 355] death <Deut. 17.11-12>. This would curbe contentions and unquiet spirits, which be full of molestations, when by their purse they can maintaine their will, bringing causes from Court to Court, and about againe, onely to make the weaker partie wearie, and so to wring from him his right, or else to bee utterly undone in following the sute: a grievous sin, and that which cryeth aloud in the eares of the Lord, though Lawyers fill their purses by such devilish devices. Their money perish with them, which make themselves rich by such iniquities.

*And hee said, Sit yee downe here.]* Thus spake hee to the ten Elders, when the kinsman was set downe. Which sheweth, that as *Boaz* was a great man, so also the kinsman was of greater place than they, seeing he was placed before them: yet they did not of themselves doe any thing, neither did enter upon the businesse, before these were set: so did hee esteeme of them and their authority. Whence may be noted, that *wise men in government doe so behave themselves, as they will take heed to do nothing that might weaken the authority of such as be fellowes in office, Judges, Justices, and Officers with them:* for they know, that what they derogate from them, they take from themselves, as they be Magistrates. And therefore must Magistrates uphold such as be in authority with them; though some perhaps for their person bee unworthy, yet must they bee regarded for the place they beare:<sup>72</sup> and this shall they do, if, as *Boaz* heere, they give them place with them, then not presume to handle matters apart without them, [p. 356] equally belonging to all: and thirdly, to be content to have their owne causes heard and judged by them: the contrary hereto doth argue light esteeme of fellowes in commission, if not contempt.

*And they sate downe.]* Here was no exception taken against *Boaz* in any thing: he commanded in a sort, and they obeyed: for the spirit of envie and pride were banished; else the matter had not thus been done in such peace and quietnesse: for *where one taketh no more upon him than he may; and other yeeld what they ought, being humble and not hauty, there every thing is done peaceably,* as wee see here: but where a *Moses* meeteth with a rebellious-spirited proud *Corah* and his company, there all things fall out contrarily.<sup>73</sup> The word *to sit*, is used sometime to consider of,

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<sup>72</sup> Bernard seems to indicate that the fraudulent judges he mentions on p. 305 should not be deprived of their authority. His support for hierarchy, here expressed in terms of the status of magistrates, evidently overrides his concern to eliminate corruption.

<sup>73</sup> Bernard repeatedly returns to the example of Korah's rebellion, Num. 16, (on pp. 9, 162, 193, 346 as well as here) so demonstrating his concern to insist on obedience to authority.



to advise, to take care of; and the gesture of sitting, which was the gesture of Kings and Judges, is a gesture of rest, quietnesse and peace <1 Kings 1.46; Prov. 20.8; Matt. 19.28; 2 Sam. 7.1>: to teach this, that *men in the seat of Judgement should be advised, considerate, carefull what they doe, and of a quiet spirit without perturbation*. Such a one was *Joshua* in his proceeding against *Achan*, hee spake mildly, lovingly, without passion, without words of bitterness, or contempt, yet did hee not neglect to execute justice upon him, as hee well deserved, and the cause required: he derided not the prisoner, hee railed not upon him; but with a fatherly gravitie and words of like authority he spake unto him <Josh. 7.19, 25>: his example is for imitation, and a checke to some deriding and scoffing spirits, sitting as Judges upon life and death.<sup>74</sup>

[p. 357] Verse 3. *And hee said unto the kinsman, Naomi that is come againe out of the countrey of Moab, selleth a parcell of land which was our brother Elimelechs.*

Thus *Boaz* beginneth his speech of the sale of land, who it was that would sell it, how much, a parcell, and to whom it did belong before, as thereby shewing her right unto it, not as an Inheritrix, but as a dowrie<sup>75</sup> to her, as his wife.

<sup>74</sup> Bernard follows Lavater's interpretation of the fact that judges are seated to mean that they should be quiet, peaceable and calm, and his noting that 'to sit' has been used to mean to advise, to care for and to consider of (*Lavater* 114v). Bernard has previously used the instance of Joshua's treatment of Achan to illustrate loving speech (160, 161, 286, 292). Here, he makes it plain that he makes this argument despite the fact that Joshua imposed the brutal punishment of stoning to death on Achan (Josh. 7.25). His convictions about justice mean that he sees no incongruity in kind words being accompanied by vicious actions.

<sup>75</sup> 'dowry': 'dower'. 'dower': 'The portion of a deceased husband's estate which the law allows to his widow for her life.' (*OEDO*). Bernard returns to Naomi's dowry later in his exposition of the verse (358). A similar explanation of Naomi's right to the land is found in Lavater (115r-115v), drawing on Nicholas of Lyra (*MET* 63). Topsell describes the land as the inheritance of Elimelech (205). He subsequently illustrates the allowance of maintenance to widows by reference to Ruth (215-216). The

*And hee said unto the kinsman.]* Before *Boaz* uttered the cause of his comming into that Session, hee saw all settled, and audience given: for though hee earnestly affected the businesse, as may appeare by that which hath beene delivered of him in the former chapter,<sup>76</sup> yet would he carry the matter wisely and discretly: hereby teaching this, that *the wisdom of a wise man keepeth him so, as he is not carried beyond discretion*: for wisdom maketh him to understand his way, to bee also well advised, to worke by understanding, and to order his wayes with discretion <Prov. 14.8 and 13.10 and 13.16>. Such therefore as bee over-swayed with any passion either of love, or anger, or what else exceeding discretion, want wisdom at that time to bridle their disordred affection, and unruly passion, which is often brutish, without reason, without Religion, and therefore unbefitting a godly man.<sup>77</sup> Note farther, that *Boaz* having a cause, he in this great Session of ten Elders, besides the rest, declareth [p. 358] the matter himselfe, it beeing a happy libertie in that Common-wealth. It was not like those places, where men cannot bee allowed to speake in their owne cause, though they bee never so able, but they must hire others to speake for them: by which it commeth to passe, that causes are spunne out to an exceeding length, and not often faithfully handled: for men hired to set their wits and

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medieval commentators preceding Nicholas of Lyra provide a wider range of explanations. The Christian commentator Hugh of St. Cher, writing shortly before Nicholas, suggests that Naomi had sold the field when she left (MET 44). The Jewish commentators take a particular interest in the issue. Salmon ben Yeroham states the view that the field was Naomi's dowry but he also mentions the interpretation that Naomi inherited the land from her sons (BJE 78-9). The Anonymous Rabbi declares that everything belonging to Elimelech, Chilion and Mahlon had passed to their wives according to their marriage contracts (BJE 129). According to Abraham ibn Ezra, the widow had a marriage contract, and the rest was inherited by the mother of the dead man (BJE 143). Josephus does not mention Naomi selling the land, but the kinsman as answering Boaz that the laws cede the heritage of Elimelech and his sons to him on account of nearness of kin (Josephus [Loeb] 149). The early modern commentators disregard the strand of the medieval Jewish interpretation that takes women's right to inherit property for granted. This can be seen to reflect the weak position of women in law regarding property in the early modern period (Mendelson and Crawford 40-2).

<sup>76</sup> See p.327.

<sup>77</sup> Here, Bernard again shows his awareness of contemporary passion theory.

tongues on sale, what will they not doe? Doth not our age produce enow evill, lamentable and cursed fruits hereof? And have we not cause to bewaile the manifold mischiefes and ensuing miseries, which this generation of evill men bringeth forth daily among us?<sup>78</sup>

*Naomi that is come againe out of the countrey of Moab.*] Of her person, and returne from that place, see before, Chapter 1.6.<sup>79</sup> Here she is propounded as the sales-woman: the land she had by *Elimelech* her husband, as the last words of this verse shew, as her joynture or dowrie: for wives had land among the Jewes and Israelites <2 Kings 8.6>: and *good reason there is that wives should be provided for by them, which have lands to leave them*, because they are one with the husband, they have laboured together, and love binds the husband to have care for her after death; for her comfort, her better esteeme even with her owne children: for if they have any thing, then children will love and honour them, and glad will they seeme to be which of them may have her companie, and may please her best: but if she have nothing, they will bee as glad, which may be rid of her. Therefore let [p. 359] husbands have a care to provide for them, and not bee like some husbands, which give all or most to children, and little or nothing to wives, but what Law will give them.<sup>80</sup> and that he may so doe, let the wife labour to deserve well of the husband; and yet though shee deserve well, let him not give all to her, and little to children, as some doe, and so undoe both her selfe and children with an after-choise of a bad

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<sup>78</sup> Bernard follows Lavater and Topsell in praising Boaz's representing himself and censuring the abuses to which legal representation is liable, allowing lawyers, as Lavater puts it, to 'bable out many words' instead of the 'few fit and plaine words' used by Boaz (*Lavater* 117v; *Topsell* 212-213).

<sup>79</sup> See pp. 33-6.

<sup>80</sup> Common law stipulated that a widow had a right to a third of her husband's property if she had children or half if she did not have children; however, this was forfeited if she eloped (*Mendelson and Crawford* 40).

husband.<sup>81</sup>

*Selleth a parcell of land.*] That is, determineth to sell a portion or piece of land left her by *Elimelech*. Shee was growne poore, and therefore might sell her land: for so we doe reade, that *the poore might sell land or houses: and this selling and buying is lawfull* <Lev. 25.25, 29>, as wee may see by Gods approbation, and the practice of the godly in buying and selling <Gen. 23<sup>82</sup>>.<sup>83</sup> The manner of purchase, and sale, and conveyance is shewed in the Prophecie of *Jeremie* <Jer. 32.6,<sup>84</sup> 44>: it must be without oppression: and this will bee avoided, if men feare God <Lev. 25.14<sup>85</sup>>. But the Lord allowed not the sale but upon necessity; hee must become poore first <Lev. 25.25>. The Jewish Interpreters upon that place of Leviticus say, that no man but the poore might sell his inheritance; other might not sell to put money in their purses, to make marchandize, or other things, save onely for food and necessary livelihood.<sup>86</sup> How justly then are here condemned among us, such as sell their lands for to spend at play, to runne a whoring, to goe gayly, and in costly rayment, to keepe Hawkes and Hounds, to travell into Idolatrous countreys to see fashions, and to learne, not good [p. 360] manners, but bad conditions<sup>87</sup> with Apish complements?<sup>88</sup> Others also

<sup>81</sup> Bernard's concluding warning about the widow undoing herself and her children is characteristic of criticism of widows in the period (see Swetnam 59-64). Topsell makes a similar observation, which Bernard is evidently following. Topsell claims that widows who receive most of their husbands' wealth often make youthful marriages which impoverish their offspring (216).

<sup>82</sup> The whole chapter is relevant.

<sup>83</sup> Bernard follows Lavater in observing that Naomi intended to sell the land left her by Elimelech (*Lavater* 115v). However, he does not here attempt to explain why redemption of the land is mentioned. This issue is addressed by Nicholas of Lyra, who suggests that Naomi had already sold the field so the closest kinsman was to redeem it (*MET* 63). Hugh of St. Cher makes a similar explanation (*MET* 44). The medieval Jewish commentator Salmon ben Yeroham also gives this explanation (*BJE* 78-9). Bernard does follow these predecessors when he expounds verse 9 (pp. 400-401).

<sup>84</sup> Verses 7-14 are also relevant.

<sup>85</sup> Verse 17 is also relevant.

<sup>86</sup> This rare acknowledgement of indebtedness to Jewish interpreters suggests that Bernard will have been conversant with Jewish commentaries on the Book of Ruth. See the Introduction sections 4.1 and 4.2.2.

<sup>87</sup> 'conditions': 'Personal qualities; manners, morals, ways; behaviour, temper.' (*OEDO*).

<sup>88</sup> 'complements': 'ceremonies of civility or politeness.' (*OEDO*).

which sell their possessions, because they would live idly, to put the money out to usurie, and so live lazily, but yet cursedly, upon the sweate of other mens browes. These and the other should say with *N[ab]oth*, God forbid that I should sell my fathers inheritance,<sup>89</sup> especially selling as these doe, to bestow and lay out the mony so accursedly. But let such Unthrifths know, which sell their land to waste upon their lust, that they doe wickedly rob their posterity, they weaken their present estate, they bring upon themselves beggery, and so contempt and misery, and that very justly, and do (as much as lieth in them) roote out their names from the places, where their Ancestours, by Gods blessing, had planted them; and when all is spent, they expose themselves to many temptations, to take lewd courses to helpe themselves, which bring many to a shamefull end. Let them remember, that if they cannot live with their estates, how can they live without them? Paines they cannot take, they have idly beene brought up; which often is the cause of this prodigality: to beg they bee ashamed, because of reproach justly to light upon them; therefore must they fall to stealing, and so come that way into the Magistrates hands, that they may be punished for their former villanies, which the Magistrate took no notice of, or made no conscience to punish.<sup>90</sup>

*Which was our brother Elimelechs.*] Thus *Boaz* calleth him, who was but his kinsman, though [p. 361] neere. This was usuall among the Jewes and Israelites so to call one another; yea, it is observable, that *Gods people in all ages have called one another brethren*; before the Law, under the Law, and in the time of the Gospell <Gen. 14.14; Exod. 2.11; Lev. 19.17; Deut. 13.19;<sup>91</sup> Rom. 1.13; Matt. 6;<sup>92</sup> Gal.

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<sup>89</sup> See 1 Kings 21.3.

<sup>90</sup> The idle gentleman who supports himself by spending his estate is a regular object of Elizabethan and Jacobean satire. See Roderigo in *Othello* and Sir Andrew Aguecheek in *Twelfth Night*.

<sup>91</sup> The correct reference may be Deut. 17.20.

<sup>92</sup> The correct reference may be Matt. 7.3-5.

4.26;<sup>93</sup> 1 Pet. 2.17; Rom. 12.10; Heb. 13.1; 1 Thess. 4.9; 1 John 3.14>; and good reason so to do: for they have all one Father, and all one Mother.<sup>94</sup> Which should teach us brotherly love one towards another; to love as brethren, that is, with respect to our Father, and wee his adopted Children: for whoso after this manner loveth, is translated from death to life.<sup>95</sup> Also such as love like brethren, are familiar, they have a feeling of each others estate both in prosperity and adversity, rejoycing or sorrowing, as it falleth out, and that because they be brethren;<sup>96</sup> they doe also shew readinesse to helpe one another, as brethren should doe, and they hold it a shame to do them wrong. Therefore let us love, and love as brethren, and try it by these true brother-like markes of love: which if a man doe, hee shall find little brotherly love among men: for few love a man in this respect, as he is the Child of God: few are familiar with the vertuous for their vertues sake: And who mourneth with them in the true cause of their mourning, or rejoyceth with them in their joy? If men so doe, where is their helping hand to further their joy, or to helpe them when they be troubled for righteousness sake?

[p. 362] Verse 4. *And I thought to advertise thee, saying, Buy it before the Inhabitants, and before the Elders of my people. If thou wilt redeeme it, redeeme it;*

<sup>93</sup> The correct reference is Gal. 4.28.

<sup>94</sup> See Gal. 4.26, which is listed in the series of references in the margin immediately above.

<sup>95</sup> Bernard is probably thinking of 1 John 3.14: 'We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.'

<sup>96</sup> Bernard here alludes to Rom. 12.15. In doing so he reinforces his approval of the Bethlehemite women for rejoicing at the birth of Obed in verse 14, where he cites this reference (445). Lavater and Topsell also draw attention to St. Paul's injunction when they expound the women's response to Obed's birth (Lavater 148v-149r; Topsell 277-8). Topsell laments the failure of people in his own time to follow the injunction. Bernard makes a similar comment in the present passage and, in chapter 4, criticises those who, in various ways, fall short of correctly following the injunction (445-447). The conclusion of Bernard's discussion here, that there is little brotherly love amongst men in his time, is characteristic of his own frequently expressed perception that the godly are surrounded by ungodly people.

*but if thou wilt not redeeme it, then tell me that I may know: for there is none to redeeme it, besides thee, and I am after thee. And hee said, I will redeeme it.*

*Boaz* here sheweth why he telleth the kinsman of *Naomi* her selling of land, to offer him the sale first. In which offer note, First, what the offer is, to buy it; then, before whom. Thirdly, the manner of propounding it, as left free to his choise, to redeeme or not to redeeme. Fourthly, the reason why offered to him in the first place, and that by *Boaz*. Lastly, the kinsmans answer, taking the offer.

*And I thought to advertise thee.]* To wit, of the sale of the land: and this *Boaz* doth, for that hee had to deale with a worldling, with whom hee would deale plainely, in telling him first of that which most affected him, and of the earthly commodity, before hee spake of marrying *Ruth*.<sup>97</sup> Whence we may learne, First, that *worldlings are carried away most with worldly respects*: therefore *Boaz* doth thus begin with the kinsman: for worldlings savour onely of the Earth, like Moales which live in it; and though they now and then come up out of the Earth, they by and by runne againe into it; they are like the Serpent, whose seed they bee, living upon the dust of the [p. 363] Earth, gold, silver, and transitorie goods, the sight and enjoying whereof is to them as food and life; their wisdom also is from below, which is *Earthly*, making men covetous; and *Sensuall*, making men delight in beastly

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<sup>97</sup> Here, Bernard introduces the question of Boaz's motivation in telling the kinsman of the land before mentioning marriage to Ruth. Lavater, Topsell and Bernard all note that Boaz was cautious when he put the matter in the order that he did. Lavater argues that since the kinsman was evidently 'covetous, craftie, and contentious' Boaz was justified in not dealing directly with him. He thus avoided possible contention in the future (*Lavater* 117r). Presumably this was because if he had been told about the land after rejecting Ruth he might later have claimed that he would have married Ruth if he had previously been told about the land. There might then have been a dispute over the land. Topsell, for his part, says that Boaz spoke 'very obscurely, that thereby he might thoroughly try his minde and good will toward Naomi' (210-211). Topsell goes on to praise Boaz's courtesy to the kinsman. In this 'holy example [. . .] wee are admonished, that with the like charitie, wee handle our neighbours, if wee have them at any advantage' (*Topsell* 211-212). As for Bernard, he here puts all the emphasis on the kinsman's covetousness, which enables him to pass directly to reflections on this sin.

pleasures; and *Devilish*, full of craft, fraud, wicked policie, and subtile devices <Jas. 3.15>. This wisdom below followeth the things of this world, even the lusts of the eyes, which are earthly; the lusts of the flesh, which are sensuall; and pride of life, which is devilish. Therefore let us hereby try our worldlinesse, and whether wee be such as worldlings be, the signes whereof bee these: First, when we are more moved to doe any thing for profit and gaine, then for the Commandement of God, or charitie, or any other motive by which the godly are drawne on to doe that which they should doe. Secondly, when our hearts are wholly set upon the world, minding altogether earthly things, which sheweth that there is our treasure, because our hearts be there. Thirdly, when we grow more covetous, as riches encrease, setting our hearts upon them <Isa. 32.6<sup>98</sup>>. Fourthly, when wee speake like worldlings, who can utter their thoughts freely in these earthly matters; but are in spirituall matters very blockish, if not senselesse. Fifthly, when wee bee not liberall-minded; for a liberall person is set against the niggard and churle <Isa. 32<sup>99</sup>>, who is called in Hebrew, *Nabal*,<sup>100</sup> a foole:<sup>101</sup> for so is the covetous worldling: also *Kelai*, of a word which signifieth to consume, for that hee wasteth himselfe in the world, and for the world: by circumlocution he [p. 364] is said to be one *greedie of gaine* <Prov. 1.19>, one that loveth silver, and abundance, and is not satisfied <Eccles. 5.10>. The Grecians calleth him *Philarguros*, one that loveth money <Luke 16.14<sup>102</sup>>; and *Pleonectes*,<sup>103</sup> one that would have more, never contented: and therefore to be covetous and contented, are put as contraries, the one being forbidden, and the other commanded

<sup>98</sup> The correct reference is Ps. 62.10.

<sup>99</sup> Specifically, verses 5-8.

<sup>100</sup> Bernard provides the Hebrew word in the margin which he transliterates in the text.

<sup>101</sup> See 1 Sam. 25.3.

<sup>102</sup> Verse 13 is also relevant: 'Ye cannot serve God and mammon.'

<sup>103</sup> Bernard provides the Greek words in the margin which he transliterates in the text.



<Heb. 13<sup>104</sup>>: this is the worldling. Secondly, note, that *an honest man dealeth plainely, and not covertly with others in these worldly businesses*. Boaz concealeth not the commoditie, which the kinsman might reape in marrying of *Ruth*; he propoundeth not her, and concealeth this: for an honest man hateth fraud and deceit; he doth to others, as hee would that they should doe to him. If therefore we would bee held honest, let us deale uprightly and plainely with others, with whom we have to doe: for it is sincerity, it maketh a mans word of credit, and bringeth him into the reputation of an honest man: and let this be remembred, that fraud and deceit God will certainly avenge <1 Thess. 4<sup>105</sup>>. Thirdly, note, that *albeit man may not deceive his brother, yet is he to proceed wisely, to use prudence and discretion in his affaires*: as knowing what to speake first, what next: for there is time for all things, as *Salomon* saith,<sup>106</sup> so in this also. And it is no fraud to utter one thing before another, and so to speake truly to further the matter in hand; to conceale also a thing for a time, so it be with no ill intent, not to deceive, or hurt my brother any way, it is not to bee condemned, but rather to bee allowed, as a point of wisdom and prudence in a man: and [p. 365] therefore may it be observed honestly and justly, without staine or cracke of credit.

*Saying, Buy it before the Inhabitants, and before the Elders of my people.]*

Both the Elders and people were gathered together, as we may heere see, and in verses 9 and 11. Here the Inhabitants are named before the Elders; in the 9 verse the Elders before them; and in verse 11 these before the Elders againe, as shewing how *one dependeth upon the other, the Elders upon the people, and the people on them by mutual relation*, one assisting another; the Officers, the people, by their power and

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<sup>104</sup> Specifically, verse 5.

<sup>105</sup> Specifically, verse 6.

<sup>106</sup> See Eccles. 3.1-8.

authority; and the people these by aid and helpe, as they should be commanded: which is peaceable happinesse in a Common-wealth. In that they bee called *Boaz* his people, it sheweth the greatnesse of this mans power in Bethlehem, as Lord and chiefe Governor there; of whose greatnesse I have spoken before.<sup>107</sup> He doth heere bring this matter thus into the publicke Assembly; for that it was publicke; for more peaceable proceeding; for better assurance, ratification, and confirmation of the businesse, when it should be concluded there before such Elders, and so great Assembly of people. Lastly, because it was to be finished in the gate of the City, by the Law of *Moses* <Deut. 25.7-8>; so it was not done in vaine-glory, or from an high spirit, but for that reason and necessity so required. *Matters of importance are so to bee handled for place and person, as may best serve to end the same peaceably without farther adoe, if it may be.*

*If thou wilt redeeme it, redeeme it.] Boaz* doth not [p. 366] urge him, but leaveth him to his choise; he telleth him of the land, but urgeth him not with the Law; because he did not much care, whether the kinsman would redeeme it or no, having a desire to match with *Ruth* himselfe. Whence we may observe, that *there a thing is rather propounded, then heartily urged, where the mind is not bent to have it effected*: that wee usually leave to mens choise, which we are very indifferent in, not much caring whether it be, or bee not. So doe many preach, propounding the Doctrine of godlinesse, rather than earnestly urging the same; because they bee indifferent towards their hearers, not much caring whether they serve God or no. By this may the heartie affection or coldnesse in a cause be judged of. Here note by the way, how *the Kinsman the Redeemer was a type of Christ*,<sup>108</sup> who became, by taking

<sup>107</sup> See pp. 127-9, 159-60, 252, 339-40, 342.

<sup>108</sup> An only slightly different allegorical concept is found as early as the commentary on the Book of Ruth of Isidore of Seville (c. 560-636). (MET 7).

our nature upon him, our Brother and Redeemer <Isa. 59.20>, who redeemeth us, First, from sinne, from a vaine conversation, that wee might bee a peculiar people to God, zealous of good workes <1 Pet. 1.18; Tit. 2.14>. Secondly, from our Enemies, that we might serve him in holinesse and righteousness all the dayes of our life <Luke 1.74-5>. Thirdly, from under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sonnes <Gal. 4.5>. Fourthly, from the curse of the Law, that the blessing of *Abraham* might come upon us, and that wee might receive the promise of the Spirit <Gal. 3.13-14>. Fifthly, from the wrath to come, and so to give us the Inheritance of Life and Glory <1 Thess. 1.10>.

*But if thou wilt not redeeme it, then tell me, that I may know.*] Note, First, that *a man is either to per- [p. 367] forme his duetie, or to render up his right to another that will:* for else he is as the tree, which keepeth the ground barren, and good for nothing, but to bee cut downe, and cast into the fire <Luke 13<sup>109</sup>>. A good lesson to idle and negligent Ministers, who should either take paines to teach, or yeeld up their places to such as would; else let them looke for the end of the unfruitfull tree, and the reward of the unprofitable, wicked and slothfull servant, which was cast into utter darkenesse, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth <Matt. 25.30>.<sup>110</sup> Secondly, that *one man knoweth not the mind of another, till it bee revealed and made knowne unto him,* as *Boaz* acknowledgeth here, and as the Apostle teacheth, and *Salomon* also <1 Cor. 2.11; Prov. 20.27>: and therefore are we to bee charitable in censuring mens hearts, when wee know not the intent thereof, till it be revealed, as by words: for of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh: or by workes: for, as our Saviour saith, *By their workes you shall know them;* or by signes and tokens; by lookes and

<sup>109</sup> Specifically, verses 6-9. Bernard is also thinking of Luke 3.9, where casting into the fire occurs.

<sup>110</sup> Bernard's complaint about negligent ministers is typical of puritan writers in this period. See John Milton's 'Lycidas' (1637): 'The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed', line 125.

gesture: for where the eyes bee loftie, the heart is hautie <Ps. 131.1 and 101.5>; and the gesture stately, the minde is great. Thus may wee judge of the mind and heart: for by words, workes, and gesture may they be knowne, *and their countenance*, saith *Esay, doth witnesse against them* <Isa. 3.9, 16>. And therefore should we looke to these, and strive to have an outward carriage comely and decent as befitteth Christians, if we would not have the inward man censured and thought evill of.

*For there is none to redeeme it besides thee.*] The [p. 368] reason why he adviseth the kinsman: for that he was the next, if the other refused, and the other had the right before him. *An honest and just dealing man will not enter upon another mans right without his leave, and first acquainting him therewith:* for otherwise wrong should bee offered to him, which an honest man is loth to doe, love binding him to doe better unto his neighbour, as we see by *Boaz* here; whose example let us bee willing to follow, as we would be accounted just and honest. Againe note, that *in the sale of land, he is to have the first offer, who hath a right thereto after the present possessour, before another:* if such a one be able and willing to buy the same; if either the Law would make him heire, or the bond of naturall love should perswade thereto. In so doing, an even course is kept, love is observed, houses and families are upheld, when that which belonged to a familie or kindred, is kept among themselves, and not alienated unto another house or stocke: which therefore for mens outward name and better strengthning of their familie, is fit to be observed.

*And I am after thee.*] As if he had said, I rather than any other propound this unto thee, because if thou wilt not doe thy duety, I will, being the next kinsman. *They are most fit to put others in mind of their duety, which have a more speciall reason and calling thereto than others, and a mind and abilitie to performe what*

*others doe neglect:* for where these concurre, as they did in *Boaz*, the partie admonishing cannot justly bee excepted against. And [p. 369] therefore let us looke whether we, in going to urge others to their dueties, have a calling by speciall reason so to doe, else may we be condemned for too busy-bodies; likewise whether wee have a conscience in our selves, that we bee not guiltie of unwillingnesse to do our duety in that which we presse others unto, lest it bee said to us, *Physician, heale thy selfe.*

*And hee said, I will redeeme it.*] This sheweth that hee was a worldling: for this kinsman, after so long a famine, had ready money to purchase, but not a penny to give to poore *Naomi* and *Ruth*, as *Boaz* did. *Boaz* was rich, and had wherewith to redeeme the inheritance, but he was mercifull; so he was a rich man in the world, but not of it, as a worldling is: for *a worldling is one of the world, loving it, seeking it with greedinesse, hoarding up, and ready ever to be buying, but without mercy to the poore*, as this Kinsman seemed to be. By this, learne to behold a worldling, and a godly rich man; both getters, both full of coyne, both ready to purchase, herein they differ not: but the one hath regard to the Law of God, so not the other; one hath a mercifull heart to be liberall to the poore, and so hath not the other; the one in his purchase hath respect to the good of his brother, the other regards wholly and onely his owne commodity; for hee is unsatiable, being like the dry sandy ground, which drinks up raine; like the Dropsie, the Horse-leech, the Grave, and barraine Wombe, which be never satisfied;<sup>111</sup> no more is the covetous worldling, his encreasing [p. 370\*] and getting satisfieth him not; but rather maketh him the more greedy of gaine. Which miserable corruption is much to be bewailed, and happy contentment is to bee

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<sup>111</sup> See Prov. 30.15-16.

sought after, as the Apostle exhorteth <Heb. 13.5>.

Verse 5. *Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitesse, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance.*

*Boaz* propoundeth now the thing principally intended. In which may be noted, when it was spoken of, what, and the end why.

*Then said Boaz.*] When hee saw him forward to buy the land, and as one prepared thereby, in his understanding, to have the offer of *Ruth* made to him, then he propounded her, teaching this, that *then a matter is fit to be spoken of, when the party may seeme to bee prepared thereunto*: and this is wisdom both concerning spirituall and corporall things. Thus may we see how *Boaz* did here; so the wise woman of Tekoa did to *David* <2 Sam. 14<sup>112</sup>>; and in like sort *Nathan* to *David*; the Prophet to *Ahab* <1 Kings 20.39-40, 42>; and thus did *Joseph* prepare his brethren, before hee discovered himselfe to them. And in this manner doth God in shewing his will to us; he prepared his people in giving the Law <Exod. 19<sup>113</sup>>; and *John Baptist* must prepare the way before Christ come with the Gospell: and so must *Paul* be prepared with humiliation, before the Lord tell him his good pleasure, and put him into his function [p. 371] to carry his Name unto the Gentiles <Acts 9<sup>114</sup>>. And thus did *Peter*, before he propounded the chusing of *Mathias*, and the Word of glad tidings to the Jewes <Acts 1<sup>115</sup> and 2<sup>116</sup>>; for in doing this, we may greatly further

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<sup>112</sup> Specifically, verses 1-20.

<sup>113</sup> The whole chapter is relevant.

<sup>114</sup> Specifically, verses 1-18.

<sup>115</sup> Specifically, verses 15-22.

<sup>116</sup> Specifically, verses 14-36.

what we doe intend. And therefore let us learne this wisdom to put it also into practice.

*What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitesse.*] The reason of this speech of buying first of *Naomi*, then of *Ruth*, is this: *Naomi* was *Elimelechs* widdow, to whom the land did belong, and whom the kinsman should have married; but seeing shee was too old to marry, and to beare children; and now *Ruth* yong, and the widdow of one of *Naomi* her sonnes, shee was to supply *Naomi* her defect; and shee, when the land was to bee redeemed, must also be married to the Kinsman, albeit shee was a Moabitesse: for Gods Law was not partiall, but extended in Israel, in that case, for which the Law was given to the woman, whether shee were an Israelitesse, or of another nation, and married to an Israelite. Note here, that *Boaz* at the first propounded not so much as he intended: yea, *what is principally intended, is often last propounded*, as here, *or wholly concealed*, usuall with Statists: as we may see in *Saul*, who propounded the marriage of his daughter to *David*, as if hee honoured and loved him, when the end of his policie was to destroy him <1 Sam. 18.9, 17, 21, 25>. *Jeroboam* propoundeth tranquillitie and rest to Israel, and that he had care to save them from so great cost and trouble, as to go up to Jerusalem, [p. 372] there to worship; hee would for their ease, have them worship at *Dan* and *Bethel* the golden Calves: but this their fleshly ease, effected by this devilish policie, was not intended, but the safety of himselfe, and the confirming of the Kingdome to himselfe, of which yet in the end he was deceived <1 Kings 12.26-7<sup>117</sup>>. Seeing that lesse is at first propounded sometime then intended, and the maine thing now and then concealed, as these examples shew,

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<sup>117</sup> Verses 28-33 are also relevant.

and as wee may see it in the Serpent that Grand *Politician* unto *Eve*; let men learne to be wise to sift the drift, if they have to do with men of wisdom, and of a deepe reach; else avoid them, if their owne apprehension bee too shallow to conceive them, lest by credulity they bee overthrowne. But *it may here be asked, seeing Boaz did propound not that which at the first he chiefly aimed at, whether it be lawfull so to doe?* I answer, Yes: for to propound one thing before another, is not evill, neither to conceale sometime part of our mind, as wee may see in *Samuel*, so advised by God himselfe to speake <1 Sam. 16.2>: yea that may bee sometime spoken, and in some case, which may seeme to further a thing in hand, and yet bee the way to prevent, and tend to the well-fare of another, as the counsell of *Hushai* to *Absalom*; which counsell was not to overthrow *Absalom*, though by Gods hand it fell out so, but to provide for the safety of *David*, and to crosse the counsell of *Achitophel*, which tended to the utter destruction of *David*, the Lords Anoynted <2 Sam. 17<sup>118</sup>>; which was honest and godly policie, in which no evill, but good was [p. 373] intended of *Hushai* his part, which differs much from the damnable policie of *Saul* and *Jeroboam*: which subtile men most commonly follow and put in practice. We may also observe here maintenance for *Naomi*, and marriage for *Ruth*, so as both the widdowes were cared for: for *of widdowes God hath ever had an especiall care* <Exod. 22.22-3>. To a widdow must *Elijah* goe to preserve both his owne and her life <1 Kings 17<sup>119</sup>>: for a widdow must *Elisha* worke a miracle to discharge her debts, that shee and her children also may live <2 Kings 4.1<sup>120</sup>>: for widdowes left childlesse, a Law was made for their marriage <Deut. 25<sup>121</sup>>, and maintenance

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<sup>118</sup> Specifically, verses 1-23.

<sup>119</sup> Specifically, verses 8-16.

<sup>120</sup> Verses 2-7 are also relevant.

<sup>121</sup> Specifically, verses 5-6.



allowed for such, if shee were a Priests daughter, when she returned to her fathers house <Lev. 22.13>. And therefore let men have respect to the widdowes, as *James* exhorteth, who maketh it a chiefe signe, or character of our Religion before God <Jas. 1.27>.

*The wife of the dead.*] This sheweth how *Ruth* came to have a right in an Israelite to marry with him, because her husband was an Israelite; and the Law was, that the widdow of such a one, the next kinsman should marry, if hee died without issue. But yet this is not all: for *Orpha* was the wife of the dead too; shee was married to *Chillion* brother to *Mahlon*: but *Ruths* Religion and comming with *Naomi* to dwell among Gods people, give her this benefit of Gods Law. By which wee may learne, that *Religion, and not any earthly priviledge, doth interest us into the Law of God and the benefit thereof*: for otherwise *Orpha* had as much right by the Law to the Kinsman [p. 374] and to *Boaz* as *Ruth* had. If therefore we claime a benefit by the Word, let us bee religious: for godlinesse hath the promise of this life, and the life to come: but unto the wicked no hope, so long as they so remaine, but to them the threatnings and curses be due.

*To raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance.*] This was *Moses* Law <Deut. 25.5>, and ordained for divers causes: first, to shew that by death, the right of inheritance was not lost: for it is called *his* inheritance, which figured out this, that by death we lose not our right of Heaven, which is called our inheritance. Secondly, to provide that the widow should not be without children; thereby typing, or figuring unto us, that the Church should not be left barren. Thirdly, to make the dead to live againe, and his name to remaine among such as were in the land of the living: so teaching, that the dead should rise, and enjoy Life everlasting. Fourthly, to preserve

the name of the dead, that it should not bee put out <Deut. 25.6>: so giving us to know, that God keepeth our names in remembrance, and we shall not perish. Fifthly and lastly, to preserve the honour of the first borne; when hee that was begotten by the kinsman, was to beare the name of the dead, and not his name which begot him: so God would teach us, that Christ, the first begotten, should be honoured; and such as were begotten by spirituall Fathers, the Ministers of the Word, should carry Christs Name, and from him bee called Christians, and not by the name of their Teachers, [p. 375] as if they begot people to themselves, but onely to Christ, to keepe up his Name amongst his Saints for ever. Besides these ends, and this typicall and figurative meaning, wee may observe, that *by Moses Law, kindred were to uphold the name of their house, that it perished not*: for it was a great curse to have a mans name rooted out <Ps. 109.13; Jer. 22.30<sup>122</sup>>. And though that Law doe not bind us, yet the Law of naturall love, and loving respect to our owne kindred, the name and credit of those which we come of, yea, and the honour which our family may come unto by obtaining antiquitie, should make us uphold it: for ancient families have a certaine honour upon them for antiquitie sake, though otherwise but poore and meane. Now, to keepe up a name, and that in good credit <See Verse 12>, we must observe and fulfill these things: first, plant Religion, and keep that among us: for so God will uphold and strengthen us, and blesse us and ours: the godly shall be had in an everlasting remembrance, but the name of the wicked shall rot. Secondly, bring up our children, and so teach them to bring up theirs, in honest courses and callings, and not to let them live idly and vainely: for nothing prevents evill more, nor upholds a mans estate better, than to live with industry and diligence in a calling: and what

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<sup>122</sup> The reference is to Coniah, also called Jeconiah and Jehoiachin, who was the last king of Judah. He was a descendant of David, and David's dynasty ended with his exile.

overthroweth houses, and bringeth men to ruine, making Gallants to sell away their inheritances, but that they have beene idly brought up, without callings, without honest employments? Thirdly, keepe our Genealogies, from [p. 376] our Ancestours, and the increase of our posterities, to behold therein the Lords blessing, and to rejoyce in our encreasing the Lords Church. Fourthly, we must helpe them up againe, which by Gods hand fall into decay: common charity, and naturall love doe perswade hereunto, and our owne credit also, in keeping our name from contempt, if that respect may move us: for the more poore, the lesse esteeme, and the greater contempt. Fifthly, we must labour to preferre our kindred to good marriages, to good places, as they shall be fit, and occasions offered, as farre forth as we shall be able to the utmost. Sixtly, we must love one another entirely. Which shall appeare: first, by our enquiring after one another, when we be separated. Secondly, by visiting one another neere, and sending one to another farther off. Thirdly, by being glad to see any of them, though descended many degrees from us: for the further off, the better appeareth the antiquity of our kindred, and the greater encrease of our house. Fourthly, by being desirous that one should make use of another, before any other whatsoever: for this combineth them very neerely in affection. Fifthly and lastly, to defend them in their just causes, and to be as one man to preserve them from wrongs and injuries offered them unjustly: this doe, but yet onely as farre as may stand with publike peace; for that must bee preferred before kindred, yea and our owne estate and lives, lest we runne into factions and partakings, and so cause civill dissention, which must [p. 377] be most carefully avoided: but otherwise, being no breach of publicke peace, no wrecke of conscience, nothing against justice and legall proceedings, we must defend them, and in their good courses uphold them in love

and charity. If every house and familie would doe thus, should not men be happy? should not every one rest in peace under his owne vine? The rich friends would supply the want of their poore kindred, and the poore would honour them, and lay downe their lives for them. Charity would rule as Queene; and justice would sit in peace; Religion would flourish, and the Land would bee blessed, and people made renowned, admired and feared.<sup>123</sup> Before I end this verse, here it may be asked, *Whether the Law of Moses, mentioning a brother, be to be understood of naturall brethren, or onely, as the Hebrewes use to understand brother, a neere kinsman, and not a naturall brother* <Deut. 25.5>?

*Answer.* It is to bee understood of a naturall brother: for the Law was in use before it was written, and so then understood by *Judah* and *Thamar*, God dispensing therewith <Gen. 38.17-18>; and *Naomi* thus understood it also <Chapter 1.13<sup>124</sup>>; though, if there bee no brother, the nighest kinsman then must marry the widdow; therefore *Ruth* claimed it of *Boaz*, and *Boaz* did propound it to the neerer kinsman: besides these, Learned men doe take the Law to be so meant.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> In this passage, Bernard, in explaining how to keep up the good name of a family, describes his idea of the good society.

<sup>124</sup> Verses 11 and 12 are also relevant.

<sup>125</sup> The question Bernard addresses here had significance for medieval Jewish commentators since the alternatives represent different solutions to resolving an issue which taxed them. This issue was how to reconcile the levirate law (Deut. 25.5) with the prohibition of sexual relations between a man and his brother's wife in Lev. 18 and 20. The Rabbanite view was that the levirate law was an exception to the law against incest. The Qaraites, on the other hand, held that 'brother' in the levirate law did not mean an actual brother (BJE 27-8). The medieval Jewish commentator on the Book of Ruth Salmon ben Yeroham holds the Qaraite position (BJE 86-7). Abraham ibn Ezra, however, maintains that the Book of Ruth does not support either the Qaraite or the Rabbanite view since the conditions of levirate marriage according to either view were not present (BJE 146 endnote 12). David Qimhi also indicates that Boaz's marriage to Ruth was not a levirate marriage since Boaz was not a natural brother (BJE 150). Lavater gives an account of the debate (123r-125v). He then sides with the Rabbanite view, making the modification that the law is to be understood in the first place of natural brothers, and then applied to other kinsmen. He points out that there is no longer a place for the levirate law (125v-126r). Bernard's treatment of the question is in the context of his earlier recognition that the Jewish understanding of brothers includes more than natural brothers (360-1). His mention of 'Learned men', presumably referring to Lavater, is the nearest he comes to alluding to the Jewish debate. Given that the levirate law was not applicable to his society, Bernard does not choose to engage in the historical elucidation which Lavater undertakes although his conclusion evidently

[p. 378] Verse 6. *And the Kinsman said, I cannot redeeme it for my selfe; lest I marre mine owne inheritance: redeeme thou my right to thy selfe: for I cannot redeeme it.*

The Kinsmans answer to *Boaz* concerning his propounding of *Ruth* to him. He refuseth her, and giveth his reason: then, he resigneth his right to *Boaz*, and repeateth againe the words of refusall, as a reason of his resignation.

*And the Kinsman said, I cannot redeeme it for my selfe.*] He could before redeeme it, but now, he saith he cannot, he loved the land, and in that respect hee was ready to fulfill the Law, but hee cared not for the woman, the poore widdow; and in this regard the Law was not respected of him. So we see, how that *Worldlings are partiall observers of Gods Law*: some part they take, and some part they leave, even as it liketh them; they looke to the bare Letter, but not the spirituall meaning; they shunne the act, but for words and thoughts they doe take no care; the sinnes in the grossest kind they avoid, but the lesser, as they account them, they make little or no conscience of; that which concerneth their pleasure, and their profit according to the Law, they are ready to doe, but on the contrary, where the Law crosseth them, that they cast behind them, as this Kinsman here; they hate popish fasts, but love drunken feasts; they abhorre superstitious worship and cost about it, but they can bee con- [p. 379] tent to live of sacriledge, and the maintenance due to Ministers, though given by Ancestours to the Church with an execration or curse upon such as shall change them to any other use; other mens dueties they can heare of, and urge the Law to them: but

to be told of their owne, and pressed to the performance thereof, they cannot endure. The reasons of this partiality are these : First, the want of the true love of God, and reverent feare of the power and authority of the Lawgiver: for where this love and feare is, there will be respect had to all the Commandements, without partiality, as we may see in *David* <Ps. 119.6>, and in other holy men of God. Secondly, the unbridled lust of man unsubdued, and not brought into the obedience of Christ by the power of the Word, as Saint *Paul* speaketh <2 Cor.10.5>: for if the Word ruled in their hearts, they would not be thus partiall in obeying Gods will, but bee like *Zacharie* and *Elizabeth*, walking in all the Commandements of God unblameable <Luke 1.6>. Thirdly, their love of pleasure and worldly profit more than God himselfe, which appeareth by this, that they will lose neither of these for Religion sake. *Herod* will doe many things, but his pleasure with *Herodias* he will not forgoe.<sup>126</sup> *Ananias* and *Saphira* will give much, sell all to give to the Church, but not give all, they will thinke more of the matter, than give away all at once, though still they will pretend it.<sup>127</sup> such *Herod*-like, and such *Ananiasses* there bee, which have not denied their pleasures, nor their profits for Religion sake: which therefore maketh [p. 380] them partiall in their obedience to God. Fourthly, the love of praises of men, and feare of them, make them to make balkes in their service to God <John 12.42-3>, now omitting this, then that, and heere trespassing, and there offending against the Law; to get this mans praise, and not to displease that; being bound onely to man, but loose in their hearts to follow their owne wils, in respect of any conscience towards God. Fifthly, the deadnesse and benumbednes of their consciences (for want of looking into Gods Law, and the searching out of their wayes

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<sup>126</sup> See Matt. 14.3-12, Mark 6.17-29 and Luke 3.19-20.

<sup>127</sup> See Acts 5.1-10.

by the same) which never troubles them for neglect of their duties, nor for the breach of any part of the Law. Sixtly, a carnall perswasion of their good estate, and that in thus doing, they be not so much to blame; because they thrive in the world, they get many friends, and they see others also to be their companions with them herein of the best ranke in the world, and such as professe to be better, yet are taken tardie in foule faults; and therefore are they hartened hereby in this their halting service and partiall obedience to God. Let us take knowledge of this to bewaile it, then to remove these causes, and to labour for the contrary graces, that wee may serve God with all our hearts. Note againe, how he saith, *I cannot*, when hee might have said, *I will not*: but hence we see, that *what man will not doe, that hee excuseth with, I cannot doe*. So did the high Priests and Elders answer our Saviour, saying, they could not tell, when indeed they would not tel him what they thought of *Johns* Baptisme <Matt. 21.27>: [p. 381] for *I cannot* is a more modest speech than *I will not*, and it carrieth a reasonable excuse with it: for in reason we thinke, that what a man cannot doe, he should not be urged to doe; and therefore doe men use to say they cannot doe that, which they have no will to doe; either of a froward spirit, which is to be condemned; or upon respect of some inconveniences, which may in some sort be excused with *I cannot doe*, to wit, with conveniencie: but this must not excuse or hinder our duety of charitie, to neglect the helping of our brother in this his necessity, or to omit to doe what we ought, or may well doe: for so to say, *I cannot*, is untruth, and an evill excuse.

*Lest I marre mine owne inheritance.*] Thus this Kinsman excuseth his refusall of *Ruth*. He might thinke, perhaps, being a worldling, that he might marre it, if he married a young woman, and so bee overcharged with children, or that in marrying

*Ruth*, hee should bee burthened with poore *Naomi*: or he having children by another, should by this bring a new charge upon him, and occasion discord by children of divers women, which seldome agree, as may be seene in *Ishmael* and *Isaac*, and *Jacobs* sonnes: or he might have another wife (as upon this place some doe note) and so by taking this, the house might be filled with contention, as wee may see when *Abraham* tooke *Hagar* to *Sarah*, also in the wives of *Jacob*, *Elkanah* his two wives, and as is very like betweene the wives of *Lamech*, the first Bigamist.<sup>128</sup> Or lastly, he might thinke, having a good inheritance of [p. 382\*] his owne, by taking *Ruth*, and begetting a sonne to the dead, and so perhaps having no more, should thereby raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, and want one for his owne, which he would not so marre, as he saith, whatsoever his thought was, thus to move him to speake. We may learne, that a *Worldling* is carefull to preserve his outward estate, that it be not marred, as he here speaketh: for such a one is wise in his generation: hee loveth his riches and wealth, and he feareth want: and it is not amisse to care to get honestly, and to preserve our lands and goods, when wee have them: for they are Gods gift, and wee are made his Stewards over them, to keepe them carefully, and to imploy them according to his will, and not after our lusts: yea, this wee are commanded to doe, and urged by *Salomon* thereto by many reasons <Prov. 27.23-7>: this care had *Abraham*, *Isaac*, *Jacob* <Gen. 33.13-14>, and *Naboth* <1 Kings 21<sup>129</sup>>; and the Apostle telleth us, that every one is to provide for his familie <1 Tim. 5.8>, as the good Huswife doth <Prov. 31<sup>130</sup>>; and parents are to lay up for their children <1 Cor. 12<sup>131</sup>>, which they cannot doe, except they be painefull, frugall, and do care

<sup>128</sup> See Gen. 4.19. Bernard evidently felt free to use the pejorative term ‘bigamist’ here because *Lamech* was a disagreeable person, boasting of committing murder. (verse 23).

<sup>129</sup> Specifically, verse 3.

<sup>130</sup> Specifically, verses 13-28.

<sup>131</sup> The correct reference is 2 Cor. 12.14.



to uphold their estates: and therefore thus farre a worldling is not to bee reprov'd; but as farre forth as he careth for the world with neglect of Religion in himselfe, and in his family, (when as first we must seeke Gods Kingdome, as Christ commandeth, and that in the first, and not in the last place <Matt. 6.33>) and as farre as he keepeth it with ship-wracke of conscience, upholding it by ill meanes, and having no care to doe good works: [p. 383\*] which two, that is, the neglect of Gods service, and of keeping of a good conscience, if they bee avoided, men may in the care of their outward estate, bee well warranted to keepe and preserve Gods blessings bestowed upon them, ever in faith to God, and love to our brethren: for, with all care wee ought most of all to uphold our spirituall estate, that we marre not that, and lose our hope of Heaven; but let the care of the one put us in mind of the care of the other, as every way more excellent. Note farther from this man, that *Worldlings thinke by obeying Gods Law, they shall marre their earthly estate*; that Religion will overthrow them: and thus they imagine, first, because they see Gods Word to crosse their worldly courses, whereby they doe use to get and uphold their estate, which indeed, cannot stand with Religion, pure, and undefiled before God. Secondly, because they are perswaded that they must doe, as men of the world doe, else they shall not thrive, howsoever Religion it selfe binds them to the contrary. Thirdly, because they trust not God, nor rely upon his Word. Fourthly, for that they see many, which goe for religious men, to be poore, and not to thrive, as they doe, or desire to doe in the world; which they impute to their overstrictnesse in Religion; and therefore doe conclude with themselves, that to live after the Rule of Gods Word, is the next way to beggery, which they will by their worldly courses prevent, if they can. But let us beware of such Atheisticall thoughts, and be farre from these [p. 384] imaginations

of Worldlings, first, because riches are from God, and not by man <Deut. 8.18>; man cannot make himselfe rich by any meanes, if Gods common blessing be not assistant thereto; experience also teacheth us this; when wee see men industrious, yea, provident and wise, as others, yet can they not attaine the halfe that others come to. Secondly, because these outward blessings, even these are promised to such, as doe live well and obey God <Deut. 28<sup>132</sup>>. Thirdly, for that many men in living carefully to please God, and to serve him, have come to great wealth, as we may reade of *Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Job, Boaz* here, *David, Jehoshaphat*, and many others. Fourthly and lastly, for that men by their rebellion against God, have lost great estates, and deprived themselves thereof, and their posterity by their wickednesse, as is evident in the example of *Saul, Jeroboam*, and others. And therefore let us not thinke our worldly estate to become worse, by carefull living after Gods Lawes, but rather better and more sure, as *Jobs* was, about whom the Lord made a Hedge for his safety.<sup>133</sup> And remember for a conclusion, that such as feare the Lord, shall want nothing that is good. *O taste, and see, saith David, that the Lord is good! blessed is the man that trusteth in him. O feare the Lord, ye his Saints: for there is no want to them that feare him. The yong Lyons lacke and suffer hunger: but they that seeke the Lord, shall not want any good thing* <Ps. 34.8-10>. Note thirdly hence from these words of the kinsman, that *the feare of worldly losse in a mans outward estate, maketh him* [p. 385] *neglect the Law of God*, as this man doth here: for Gods Word prevaieth not, it hath not a commanding power over the conscience of a covetous man; because his heart is glewed to his riches <Luke 18.22-3>, a base feare through unbelieve possesseth him, that he himselfe may come to want; and the

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<sup>132</sup> Specifically, verses 1-14.

<sup>133</sup> See Job 1.10.

love of riches so bewitcheth him, as hee valueth them above the Lords Precepts, contrary to  *Davids* account of Gods Word <Ps. 119.72[,] 103, 111 and 19.9<sup>134</sup>>. That wee may become therefore obedient to Gods Law, let us cast off this Atheisticall and Heathenish feare.

*Redeeme thou my right to thy selfe.*] The kinsman is heere willing that *Boaz* should take his right: that, which before hee said hee would redeeme himselfe, now hee is contented that another should redeeme it. So *Worldlings are content to yeeld sometimes their right unto others*, as namely that which they cannot come by, that which they cannot keepe, that which they cannot have, but with more cost then the thing is worth; or when by getting a little, there is hazzard to lose much; and likewise that which for present feare they yeeld unto, as *Benhadad* did restore Cities unto *Ahab*, because he was in his hand, and in perill of his life, which hee would by that meanes redeeme <1 Kings 20.34>.<sup>135</sup> Otherwise Worldlings willingly forgoe nothing. Therefore their yeelding of their right at any time upon the foresaid by-respect, is not thanks-worthy.

*For I cannot redeeme it.*] *None but can pretend some excuse or other why they doe not what they ought.* In this man may we observe two things: [p. 386] inconstancie, and want of charity: for before, he would redeeme it, now he will not; before yea, now nay. *Three things make men inconstant*: first, levity of minde: this is a naturall infirmity, and to be pardoned. Secondly, ignorance, and want of fore-sight of the incoveniences, which maketh him rash at first, and to repent afterwards, and so to change his mind, as this kinsman doth: this is somewhat excusable, though not

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<sup>134</sup> Verse 10 is also relevant.

<sup>135</sup> Ben-hadad was a king of Syria who was defeated in a war he started with Ahab, king of Israel, as 1 Kings 20 relates. Bernard would have classified Ben-hadad as a worldling because of his greed for Ahab's possessions when beginning the war with him (verses 2-9).

altogether without blame: for a man is to doe that which is gone out of his mouth, though it be to his owne hinderance, if nothing else hinder the performance <Ps. 15<sup>136</sup>>. Thirdly, dishonesty, which is, when a man maketh no conscience of any thing he saith or doth, but as hee seeth advantage therein to himselfe; saying and gaine saying, doing and undoing as he seeth it to tend to his owne profit: this is flat knaverie, and justly to be condemned. Of this we must take serious knowledge, and bewaile the first in us, prevent the second by good consideration and deliberation, and hate the last, as detestable falshood and dishonestie, not to be practised among Christians. Uncharitableness in this kinsman herein appeareth, that he hath no care of the name of the dead, nor respect unto the two poore widdowes, *Naomi* and *Ruth*; the land he loved and liked well, but the women he would have nothing to do with; he had a mind to inrich himselfe in worldly substance, but he had no will to shew mercy to the poore: for a worldling thinkes himselfe borne for himselfe, seeking his owne good, but not the good of an- [p. 387] other, contrary to the true propertie of charity <1 Cor. 13<sup>137</sup>>. This uncharitableness must we take heed of, and abandon selfe-love the true cause thereof; and labour for Charity, the Evidence of our Faith in God, and true Union with our Brethren in Christ.

Verse 7. *Now this was the manner in former time in Israel, concerning redeeming and concerning changing, for to confirme all things: a man plucked off his shoo, and gave it to his neighbour: and this was a testimony in Israel.*

These words are a declaration of a Custome in Israel, and brought in heere to

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<sup>136</sup> Specifically, verse 4.

<sup>137</sup> Specifically, verse 5.

shew the reason of the Kinsman his drawing off his shoo in the verse following. In this, note the antiquitie of this Custome, also where, about what, to what end, what it was, and the ratification.

*Now this was the manner in former time.*] It was no new device, but an old custome, though no where in Scripture mentioned before. In commending this Custome from antiquitie, we see, that *Antiquity hath ever beene of credit to commend a thing unto us*: by this the Prophet commendeth Religion and Worship of God to the people <Jer. 6.16>; and by this prevailed the Scribes and Pharises with their traditions, by saying it was said of old, and done by the Forefathers <Matt. 6;<sup>138</sup> Matt. 15<sup>139</sup>>. Thus the Papists seeke to grace their superstition and wil-worship:<sup>140</sup> for that which is of old, hath many Approvers of al sorts, which maketh it to be of such estimation. [p. 388] Seeing this is so, let us learne to know true Antiquity from counterfeit; the antiquity of truth, which is of God, and that of error, which is of the Divell: and that which wee find to be antiquity of truth, that to uphold, and to reject the other: so shall we approve of the truth of our Religion, as most ancient; and renounce Poperie, as a new novelty, and a religion sprung up but of late.<sup>141</sup> This should also make us to be warie, and to take good heed that we ascribe not the name of antiquity to any thing, but that which may bee proved to be sound and orthodoxe, yea, albeit being a thing but indifferent: lest if it bee evill, we, by attributing antiquitie thereunto, doe credit and adde confirmation unto it, by speaking thereof as being ancient; and when we so informe others, when wee approve of it, and practise

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<sup>138</sup> The correct reference is Matt. 5.21, 27, 33, 38, 43.

<sup>139</sup> Specifically, verse 2.

<sup>140</sup> 'will-worship': 'Worship according to one's own will or fancy, or imposed by human will, without divine authority.' (OEDO).

<sup>141</sup> Roman Catholics based their claims to legitimacy on their continuity with the early church. Protestants claimed that they just introduced corruptions. Bernard addresses the issue in his Looke beyond Luther (1623).

it, and instruct, teach, and allow our children so to thinke and doe, if the thing bee good and of approved antiquity, it is well done so to speake and practise; but if evill, wee doe amisse in misleading others, by graceing any way such a thing with the credit of antiquity, when as we rather should use all meanes to disanull and cancell the same.

*In Israel.*] *Old customes have prevailed amongst Gods people* <John 18.39>, both civill and religious customes, and that both good and bad. Good the godly have observed, as did *Joseph* and *Marie* <Luke 2.27, 42>. Bad the people have followed, such as were and be addicted to the will of men, and to the examples of their forefathers <Jer. 44;<sup>142</sup> 1 Kings 17.34, 40<sup>143</sup>>, to great and learned mens practices, being led by their owne bringing up to [p. 389] follow the opinion of the most, and not to bee guided by the Law and Precepts of God. Thus were the high places kept up in *Judea*; the golden calves worshipped in *Dan* and *Bethel*: so popish customes having taken place, wee find hard to be removed; and heathenish customes sometimes among the ignorant and vulgar people are kept and observed in divers things at some seasons of the yeere: of which in this cleare Light of the Gospell Christians should bee ashamed. Some customes are not to bee condemned simply, but only in regard of the abuse: as for friends to meet and feast, to make a feast at weddings <Judg. 14.16<sup>144</sup>>, to rejoyce, to sing, to play on instruments; yea, sometime to daunce <Jer. 31.4>, so it be that the Lords Day bee not prophaned <Isa. 58.13>, nor made the appointed day for these things, as most commonly it hath beene: for that day is set apart for better ends and holy purposes:<sup>145</sup> also so that moderation be

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<sup>142</sup> Specifically, verses 16-19.

<sup>143</sup> The correct reference is 2 Kings 17.34, 40.

<sup>144</sup> The correct reference is Judg. 14.10.

<sup>145</sup> Bernard's views on the Lord's Day were eventually published in A Threefold Treatise of the Sabbath (1641).

used herein, as in feasting, to avoid drunkennesse and gluttonie; in myrth, wanton songs, lascivious speeches, abuse of Gods Name and his Word; and in dauncing, the mixt companying of men and women: for in Israel the women daunced together, and the men alone <Judg. 11.34 and 21.21; 1 Sam. 18.6; Jer. 31.13>: as for the other, it is an allurements to vanity and folly, as daily experience may teach them that impudently will gaine-say the same. So then let us distinguish customes, and as they be good, so use them; if otherwise, cut them off, and suffer not an ungodly custome to have any authority, or to bee a law in thine heart: for oftentimes evill customes do overmaster good customes. Where- [p. 390] fore let *Hagar* bee expelled, that the promised seed may have his right and place.<sup>146</sup>

*Concerning redeeming, and concerning changing.*] Of redeeming Land, buying and selling, before hath beene spoken,<sup>147</sup> heere is mention of the exchange of one for another, as *Ahab* offered unto *Naboth*; in which, as in the other, equity is to be observed. These words brought in here, shew about what matters this ancient custome was observed, namely, in and about matters of the world. In which they had their libertie, as wee have now in these things, and not to bee found fault with or disallowed; neither need men to have any scruple in using them, nor to call them into question, when they see not therein any apparent impietie, or grosse superstition.

*For to confirme all things.*] to wit, which was done or spoken touching the redemption or change. So heere is the end of the Ceremonie, for civill use, not for superstition; it was for confirmation and establishing of the right of one upon another: for *Custome is as a Law, binding one to another, in that which is done*

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<sup>146</sup> See Gen. 21.9-11. This passage illustrates the way in which puritan writers justified their condemnation of practices acceptable in the wider society of their time. Their objections to ‘ungodly custome’ gave rise to much antagonism.

<sup>147</sup> See pp. 359-60, 368, 369-70, 382-4. Also, a subsequent passage addresses, in particular, buying (pp. 398-9) and selling (pp. 399-400).

*according to that custome.* It is good therefore to take heed how we settle a custome.

*A man plucked off his shoo, and gave it to his neighbour.]* This was the custome, or the ceremonie used according to the custome then in Israel about such things. *Severall countreyes have severall customes.* Wee deliver up our right, by taking up a piece of Earth, and doe lay it upon the deed or writing, when wee give up our right in [p. 391] free-hold; in some places by a straw in copie-hold land; some pull off a glove: here is plucking off a shoo, to signifie by the shooe, his right to the land; by plucking off, his will to forgoe it; by giving it to his Neighbour, the resigning of his right: so as the ceremonie lively setteth out the thing. But it will be asked, *Why was a shoo used in this?* It may be to note that the man acknowledgeth hereby that now hee had no right to set his foote upon it without the leave of the other; according to that with us, no man having a right, without the Owners good will, so much as to walke over another mans ground; but if hee will, he may commence a sute against him *de pedibus ambulandis*:<sup>148</sup> but such extremity is utterly void of charity, and to bee hated among Christians.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> ‘on account of straying feet’ (i.e. trespass).

<sup>149</sup> There is much discussion in preceding commentaries about the significance of the procedure described in this lemma. Many commentators address the issue of the difference of the procedure from that depicted in Deut. 25.9-10. This will be discussed where Bernard deals with the issue in expounding verse 8 (pp. 393-4). Also, many commentators consider the procedure as a confirmation of a transaction, as Bernard does here. The discussion ranges from mention of customs in the commentator’s own time and previously, marking the transfer of right, to explanations of the specific procedure here in the Book of Ruth. According to the Targum, the custom formerly in Israel was that a man took off his right-hand glove so conveying ownership to the other person (BTR 30). Salmon ben Yeroham interprets the shoe as a witness in transactions and oaths, although it was not a living being. He compares it with the heap of stones and pillar used by Laban and Jacob. He goes on to explain the procedure in the Book of Ruth as taking off a shoe in front of witnesses and handing it over. In his view this procedure was used in other matters than redemption and exchange (BJE 82-3). Rashi observes that a man drawing off his shoe here was for ratification, which was done in his time with a scarf. He mentions a debate as to who gave the shoe to whom (BJE 109-110). The Anonymous Rabbi similarly notes that formerly purchases were made by a man handing over his shoe, as in his own time property is purchased with the corner of garments. He observes that it was done before witnesses (BJE 129). Abraham ibn Ezra explains the shoe procedure in commenting on verse 8. The shoe was exchanged for the right of redemption, or, conversely, the right of redemption was given as the shoe was given (BJE 144). David Qimhi explains that the custom at the time in Israel was that a man drew off his shoe for ratification, as was done in his own time with a scarf.



*And this was a testimonie in Israel.]* This act made good the bargaine of sale or exchange in Israel: for *a common custome maketh sure a thing delivered according to that custome, where it is of force and use.* The practice of that custome shall testifie against them, and confirme their deed, where that custome is in use: for many customes are in many places, and doe differ. Let therefore such a custome be carefully observed, and beware of the breach thereof.

[p. 392] Verse 8. *Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy it for thee. So he drew off his shoo.*

This is a conclusion of the bargaine betweene them. Shewing what the kinsman both spake and did, graunting *Boaz* libertie to buy it, and observing the custome then amongst them, to ratifie the same, in the resigning of his right

*Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz.]* That is, because he said he could not redeeme it, hee saith to *Boaz*, Buy thou it: and because the custome was so, he drew off his shoo: for this word *therefore* hath reference to both clauses. Heere is a worldly man, yet hee dealeth in the resigning of his right very honestly, and so, as by

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Following the Targum, he interprets shoe as glove (BJE 151). In the medieval Christian commentaries, there is less attempt to explain the shoe procedure as confirmation of a transaction. Jerome makes clear that the man ceding his legal right undid his own sandal and handed it over (MET 3). Peter Comestor represents Boaz as telling the kinsman to take off his sandal to seal the bargain (MET 38). The early modern commentaries particularly draw attention to current customs marking the transfer of right. Lavater provides Bernard's answer to the query as to why a shoe was used by the Jews – it signified that the buyer now had the power to walk in the field. He observes that his countrymen give up their right by giving the hand (130r). Other variants on the shoe, drawn from various historical periods, include a glove, and Lavater draws attention to the Targum's specifying a glove (130r-131v). He mentions customs relating to marriage, including in his own time, and contemporary customs at conquest, dismissing servants and in the accoutrements of rulers (131v-132v). Topsell mentions contemporary customs: the striking of hands on bargains and the role of a piece of earth and a twig in the purchase of land. Also, in house sales, all leave and the buyer enters. Topsell also notes the contemporary practice of writing and seal following the ancient practice of entering men's possessions in brass and stone and the biblical recording of Abraham's purchase and Jacob's stones which were a witness between him and Laban. He explains that these measures prevent fraud (223-4). Bernard singles out some of the instances given by his predecessors.

Law and custome, the same might be confirmed and made good to *Boaz*. Hereby we see, that *some men out of common honesty being worldlings, will so passe away their right to another, as it shall stand good by Law to them*: for they will observe in such things morall honesty; they love their credit before men, they care to preserve such just dealing for their more free commerce with others, and to prevent future troubles, which they might occasion otherwise by any trick of dishonesty, when it should appeare. This we find true by experience among our selves, which is very praise-worthy; and a condemning of such as pretend a greater shew of pietie, but have not halfe the honesty, which some civill worldly men have: for if wee passe an estate to any, why should wee not make [p. 393] the purchase good to the utmost according to Law? Honesty and equity require it at our hands, if wee bee not deceivers, as some be, who make sale of that which secretly they have conveyed to others before: which practice, yea and every such like deceitfull dealing, is very theft and damned villanie.

*Buy it for thee.*] Before, the kinsman in verse 6 willeth *Boaz* to redeeme it to himselfe; heere hee saith, Buy it: so that to redeeme, was to buy the inheritance <Jer. 32<sup>150</sup>>; of which somewhat in the next verse.<sup>151</sup>

*So hee drew off his shoo.*] Thus hee observed the custome, to confirme the right unto *Boaz*. Two things are here done to put over his right, first, his word, and then his deed: one was not enough to convey it over unto *Boaz*, therefore both are conjoynd. So doth the Lord deale with us in giving us a right in the eternall Inheritance; he giveth first his Word, then, his Deed, setting to his Hand and Seale, to confirme his Word, which internally is the Spirit and heavenly graces thereof, externally the Sacraments: so that which is bought by Christ, is conveyed unto us.

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<sup>150</sup> Specifically, verses 7-8.

<sup>151</sup> See pp. 397-9.

God giveth us good assurance, as heere the kinsman to *Boaz*. *Good assurance is to bee given and taken in passing of right from one to another* <Gen. 23.18;<sup>152</sup> Jer. 32.6-8<sup>153</sup>>. It is honesty on the one side, and wisdom on the other. And therefore heerein let us be both honest and wise. But now for plucking off the shoo, wee must know that we find it two wayes used, religiously and civilly. Religiously, in reverence to [p. 394] God, as did *Moses* <Exod. 3.5> and *Joshua* <Josh. 5.15> in drawing neere unto him: which signifieth the putting off of foule and carnall affections, and to draw neere with a pure heart unto God: and in witnesse of great humility, as *David* did, acknowledging a sensible feeling of the heavie hand of God, and his afflicted estate then, which by sinne hee had justly brought upon himselfe <2 Sam. 15.30; Isa. 20.2>. Civilly: this plucking or putting off the shoo was first, for conveniencie to wash the feete; next, for confirmation of sale of land, as heere: and thirdly, for disgrace, when the kinsman would not performe the part of a kinsman, according to the Law of *Moses* <Deut. 25.9>. This is not here meant: for by the Law, the woman, after she had claimed marriage of the kinsman privately, then also shee complained to the Magistrate; if the kinsman should refuse to doe the office of a kinsman, then is she to plucke off his shoo, and spit in his face; which some expound, to spit before his face. But here is a voluntary plucking off of his owne shoo: and also the former verse sheweth it to be a custome touching redeeming and changing; and thereupon the kinsman useth it to resigne his right, and to confirme it unto *Boaz*: and not as an act of disgrace to himselfe, for not yeelding to doe the kinsmans part, which was not claimed at his hands by *Ruth* either privately or before authority: and therefore I take that this putting off the shoo, and that spoken of in the

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<sup>152</sup> Verse 17 is also relevant.

<sup>153</sup> Verses 9-15 are also relevant.

Law of *Moses* <Deut. 25<sup>154</sup>>, are not one and the same.<sup>155</sup>

[p. 395] Verse 9. *And Boaz said unto the Elders, and unto all the people, Yee*

<sup>154</sup> Specifically, verse 9, as above.

<sup>155</sup> In addressing the difference between the shoe procedure in the Book of Ruth and the levirate law procedure, Bernard follows Lavater, Topsell, and a number of medieval commentators on the Book of Ruth. The issue was raised by Josephus, who represents Boaz as instructing Ruth, witnessed by the elders, to loosen the kinsman's shoe and spit in his face according to the law ([Josephus \[Loeb\] 151](#)). Certain medieval Christian commentators consider Josephus's interpretation and suggest that in the Book of Ruth a procedure relating to the rejection of a marriage partner did occur. They develop the observation of Isidore of Seville that there was a custom a groom wishing to divorce his bride took off his sandal ([MET 7](#)). Peter Comestor first represents Boaz as telling the kinsman to take off his sandal to seal the bargain, but then quotes Josephus. He concludes that a man refusing a woman loosens his own sandal although a woman may loosen his sandal if she is protected by a man. Either way, his house is called the house of the unshod, according to Deut. 25.10 ([MET 38](#)). Hugh of St. Cher reports Josephus's interpretation but gives an account of the law which includes the rule that a man wishing to divorce loosened his own sandal. Hugh illustrates this rule with examples. He goes on to suggest an explanation for Boaz's not taking off the kinsman's sandal, having made the objection ([MET 44-5](#)). Nicholas of Lyra relates Deut. 25.9 and explains that when another relative was present, as in the Book of Ruth, the man loosened his own sandal ([MET 63-4](#)). The medieval Jewish commentators generally do not comment on the difference between the shoe procedure in the Book of Ruth and the levirate law procedure. This reflects disagreement with the assumption that Boaz's marriage to Ruth was a levirate marriage. However, Salmon ben Yeroham does address the issue. He introduces an approach which is adopted by Lavater and Topsell, in which these commentators indicate that the levirate procedure was applicable but was not followed for reasons they put forward. Salmon represents the kinsman asking to be exempted from spitting on the ground that he was impeded from marrying Ruth by an obstacle ([BJE 82](#)). He interprets the shoe procedure in the Book of Ruth as part of the transaction ([BJE 82-3](#)). Salmon emphasises that the events in the Book of Ruth are indeed like the widow who complains that her brother-in-law will not comply with the levirate law. He is aware of the view, based on linguistic grounds, that the marriage between Boaz and Ruth was not levirate, but rejects it. He reiterates his explanation of the kinsman's exemption ([BJE 85-6](#)). Lavater gives an account of the levirate law, and suggests that the kinsman pulled off his own shoe and was not spat at by Ruth because Boaz took his place. Ruth is not mentioned as being in the gate. He does not address the question posed by Hugh of St. Cher, why Boaz did not remove the shoe since he was the challenger. His rejection of the exposition of the shoe procedure in the Book of Ruth by Deut. 25.9 leads to his explanation that it was a custom used in buying and selling fields. ([Lavater 129r-130r](#)). Topsell sets out an account of the levirate law, and derives observations and lessons from it. He does this at the beginning of his exposition of verse 7 after noting that the text describes the manner of changing or selling. However, he goes on to declare that the putting off of the shoe was an outward sign to seal the matter, signifying the transfer of right ([Topsell 220-4](#)). In his exposition of verse 8 Topsell firstly interprets the shoe procedure in terms of transfer of right. However, he goes on to ask why the kinsman plucked off his own shoe rather than Ruth doing it and spitting in his face, according to the levirate law. Three explanations are put forward by Topsell. The first two explanations focus on the kinsman getting Boaz to redeem his right so the law was less rigorously enforced. The third explanation notes that Naomi and Ruth had given their consent to Boaz ([Topsell 224-5](#)). Topsell even praises Naomi for not disgracing the kinsman according to the levirate law but rather ensuring in advance that if he refused, Ruth would be married and he would not be disgraced. People should protect the good name of their neighbours ([Topsell 226](#)). The moderation of the law was justified by the aggrieved party, Ruth, being content rather than calling for 'extremity' ([Topsell 228](#)). Bernard differs from his early modern predecessors in not suggesting that the levirate procedure should have applied and giving reasons why it was not followed. He only demonstrates that it did not occur.

*are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelechs, and all that was Chilions and Mahlons, of the hand of Naomi.*

*Boaz* heere taketh witnesse of that which is done: the witnesses are the Elders and the people; the matter which they are to bee witnesses of, is the sale of all the land of *Elimelech*, *Chilion* and *Mahlon*; and the purchase thereof at *Naomi* her hand; the Kinsman resigning his right to him, that hee might buy it to himselfe.

*And Boaz said unto the Elders, and unto all the people.*] *Boaz* esteemeth of the Elders, as men in authority: but yet hee neglecteth not the people, whom also hee calleth upon to be witnesses also; this was his wisdom to procure love of all, as appeareth by their prayer made for him afterwards, verse the 11. Heere in this verse and the rest following, we may see the happy successe of that which *Boaz* tooke in hand: for it was a good matter, for a good end, and done in a right manner. Now, *when a thing which is lawfull, is taken in hand, and done well, to a right end, there way bee expected a good issue*: as may bee seene in *Dauids* setting upon *Goliah*; it was an honorable attempt, the manner of his proceeding was lawfull, hee waited for it, and had publicke authority to set him forward, and the end was Gods glory, and safety of Israel: for God is with such, and his power shall assist them, and his favour shall give them [p. 396] good successe, as hee promiseth unto such. And therefore if wee would prosper, let us observe these things in our attempts: for if the end bee good in thy intendment, and the thing unlawful, the act is sinnefull; if the matter bee good, and the end sinister, this marreth the matter: but if the matter and end bee as they should be, yet if the manner be amisse, wee may for this miscarry, as we see in

*Davids removing of the Arke <2 Sam. 6.6;<sup>156</sup> 1 Chron. 15.13>. This let us observe in comming to the Word and Sacrament <1 Cor. 11<sup>157</sup>>.*

*Yee are witnesses this day.] Boaz saith, that they are witnesses, for that they saw and heard what was done at that time, in that assembly betweene him and the kinsman; so as we see, that what men come for, and are called to see and heare, that are they witnesses of: so saith he, and they also confesse it, in verse the 11. By this may wee know who to produce for fit witnesses in a matter: such as personally are seers and hearers of that which they testifie; and as they bee fit witnesses, so then are they sound and faithfull, if they will truely and without respect of person affirme that for truth, which they know to be so: for it is one thing to be a fit witnesse, in respect of a mans knowledge; and another thing to bee a faithfull witnesse, to speake truely what he knoweth. Seeing what we see and heare, maketh us fit to bee produced for witnesses, when occasion shall serve, let us in matters of moment, for upholding of truth, justice, and peace, observe well, what we doe see, and heare, that we may be true and faithfull wit- [p. 397] nesses, to maintaine truth, justice, and peace, without all partiality.*

*That I have bought all that was Elimelechs, and all that was Chilions and Mahlons.] Here is shewed whereof they were witnesses: one thing is here specified, the other in the next verse. This heere is of the purchase of land, whereunto hee calleth them to bee witnesses, for better confirmation of the land, and the right thereof to himselfe: for witnesses are for to establish a matter <Deut. 19.15>. So wee see in Boaz a care to make sure the estate. A wise man will seeke to make sure that which hee purchaseth, as Abraham also did <Gen. 23<sup>158</sup>>, and Jeremie, who had for*

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<sup>156</sup> Verse 7 is also relevant.

<sup>157</sup> Specifically, verses 17-34.

<sup>158</sup> Specifically, verses 3-20.

confirmation of the land, first, the evidence drawne, then, the same sealed; thirdly, the same done according to Law and custome: and lastly, before witnesses <Jer. 32.10-11, 25>. Thus the Scripture commendeth unto us a care herein from these examples: it is wisdom and prudence to secure our estates in the best manner, so it be just and honest: for so shall wee prevent future contentions, which after might rise about it. And if ever men had cause to looke about them in any age, now they have: for it may be said, as *Jeremie* said in his time, *Take yee heed every one of his Neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother: for every brother will utterly supplant* <Jer. 9.4>. Heere may bee noted *Boaz* his uprightness also, who desireth to have others to take notice of his doings, and to have that publike, which should be publike: *for an honest mind is desirous to be publike, where the matter requireth it*, as in buying and selling of land, in the course of justice, in the [p. 398] Ministry of the Word, in solemnizing of marriage, and such like. It argueth an honest intention, not caring who seeth it; it will cleare him of the slander or suspicion of fraud and circumvention. And therefore in such cases labour to bee publike: for onely they which do evill, or intend it, hate the light: honest minds care not who seeth them. It is no good signe of a good intent, when buyers will marke in secret to buy lands of others, of such as bee young prodigals, or old Spendthrifts, or such as must sell for need; for those hope to make a prey, and to get that for a little, which is worth much: but such gaine is unjust: and where fraud and oppression is, there will God be an Avenger <1 Thess. 4<sup>159</sup>>. Lastly, note hence, that *it is lawfull for a rich man to buy land of others, when it is offered*, as here, when as also need is of some parcell for a speciall use, as *Abraham* did buy a burying place <Gen. 23<sup>160</sup>>, and *Omri* the hill of

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<sup>159</sup> Specifically, verse 6.

<sup>160</sup> Specifically, verses 3-20.

Samaria <1 Kings 16.24>: and when it is for good uses, as for the maintenance of Gods publike Worship <Lev. 27.22>, to build an Altar, as *Jacob* <Gen. 33.19<sup>161</sup>> and *David* did <2 Sam. 24<sup>162</sup>>: so now to buy land for maintenance of the Word, for Scholes of learning, for Hospitals, and to set poore on worke. Againe, hee may buy, to helpe a poore man, that for need must make sale to supply his want with money: but such a purchase must bee made in mercy, in great equity, and without oppression, in the feare of God <Lev. 25.14-17, 25>. And thirdly, when the salesman is his kinsman, then to buy, as a friend and kinsman, to preserve the land in their name, but especially to do the kinsman good, and that in two [p. 399] things: in giving to the utmost what it is worth, and in being ready at all times to let him redeeme it againe, if ever hee shall bee able. Thus may a rich-landed man buy land: but heere hee must take heed, first, that he intice not others to make sale of their estates, which bee not willing thereto, as *Ahab* did, which wrought that mischief which afterwards ensued <1 Kings 21.2, 4<sup>163</sup>>. Secondly, that hee make not a prey of a poore man, not of any other, which standeth in need to sell <Lev. 25.14>. Thirdly, that hee buy not upon a greedy desire, and an insatiable covetousnesse, to have all about him: for the Prophet denounceth a woe and judgements against such <Isa. 5.8-10>. Fourthly, that hee buy not in the dayes of a generall calamity, but rather imploy his money in workes of mercy: this was a vertue in *Nehemiah* <Neh. 5.16>. They therefore erre, who thinke they may buy as much as they can, if they have money, conceiving no other use thereof, but to buy and purchase therewith only for themselves, to make themselves great. And this reproveth those, which are so greedy of buying land, as they runne into the Usurers bookes, and borrow what they may, to purchase, till the use of the

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<sup>161</sup> Verse 20 is also relevant.

<sup>162</sup> Specifically, verse 21.

<sup>163</sup> For the ensuing mischief over Naboth's vineyard see verses 7-16.



money eate up a good part of the land, and themselves at the last become beggers, and so leave their children poore, their friends in bonds, and not a few lenders, perhaps, in the lurch: such is the fruit of greedy covetousnesse. But, wee may say, as it is lawfull to buy, so is it lawfull to sell. True, of which before somewhat is spoken already,<sup>164</sup> yet heere a little more of the same matter. A man [p. 400] may sell, to sustaine his poverty happening by Gods hand, as did the Egyptians <Gen. 47.18, 20<sup>165</sup>>; to recover their livelihood and health, as did the diseased woman <Mark 5.25<sup>166</sup>>; to pay debts, as did the poore widdow, to be free from bondage, and to save her life <2 Kings 4.7>: for goods and lands are for our use: and liberty, life, health, and credit are more to bee esteemed then any lands or possessions. A man may also sell to others for their need, as *Ephron* sold to *Abraham* a field, *Hamor* to *Jacob* <Gen. 23<sup>167</sup> and 33<sup>168</sup>>, and *Araunah* to *David* <2 Sam. 24<sup>169</sup>>. And thirdly, for to relieve the want of their brethren, as they did in the Primitive Church <Acts 2.45 and 4.36-7 and 5.1<sup>170</sup>>. In such cases may men sell, but not to uphold prodigality, whoredome, idlenesse, pride and vanity.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> See pp. 359-60, 368.

<sup>165</sup> Verse 19 is also relevant.

<sup>166</sup> Verse 26 is also relevant.

<sup>167</sup> Specifically, verses 8-20.

<sup>168</sup> Specifically, verse 19.

<sup>169</sup> Specifically, verses 18-24.

<sup>170</sup> Ananias and Sapphira died after failing to donate all the proceeds from selling a possession (Acts 5.1-11).

<sup>171</sup> This discussion of the lawfulness of buying and selling land evidently derives from Topsell (*Topsell* 229-35). Topsell develops Lavater's teaching, based on the example of Boaz's openness in his transactions, that people should bargain in buying, selling, changing and redeeming as if they were in the judgement place. According to Lavater, bargains in his society lack integrity (*Lavater* 134v-135r). Lavater subsequently calls for the recording of bargains to prevent contention (136v). Topsell addresses the question of the lawfulness of selling inheritances from the basis of Lev. 25.25-8 (229-31). He provides a precedent for Bernard in approving certain practices firstly in buying and secondly in selling. His opinion that it is lawful to buy if it is done publicly, and his criticism of those in his society who fail to meet this standard, (231-2) evidently derive from Lavater. His further discussion of other lawful practices of buying and then of selling gives rise to more criticism of those in his society who fail to follow them. Bernard makes points similar to Topsell's and he too criticises people in his society who do not meet his standards. Topsell and Bernard are clearly particularly anxious to attack the avarice and selfishness of the rich in the land market – a market evidently

*Of the hand of Naomi.*] The right, it may seeme, of all the lands of these three, was in *Naomi* her hands, when they dyed childlesse. Thus the Law left her well, as our Law doth many widdowes now, and the love of kind husbands. But that too many widdowes waxe wanton, and doe, in following their lust and fantasie, overthrow themselves, and their estates too; they follow not this holy and modest Matron, who sought no marriage for her selfe in her old age (as some with us doe, to their shame) but shee had care for her beloved daughter in law, *Ruth*. If shee had such lands to sell, may some say, why lived shee so poorely, and suffered *Ruth* to goe and gleane, and live upon the almes of *Boaz*? *Naomi* had not the possession of these lands, being sold away before, but the right first to redeeme, if shee had [p. 401] beene able, which shee put over to *Boaz*, when the Kinsman refused to redeeme them, and so to helpe *Ruth* in her marriage.

Verse 10. *Moreover, Ruth the Moabitesse, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to bee my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: yee are witnesses this day.*

*Boaz* relateth the second thing of which they were to be witnesses, which was concerning his marriage: where note, first, with whom. Secondly, how obtained. Thirdly, to what end, is double. And fourthly, the calling of them againe to witnesse it.

*Moreover, Ruth the Moabitesse.*] This was shee whom he had promised to

marry, and whom hee now went about to make sure to him, though she were a Moabitesse. Here it may bee demanded, *whether persons of divers religions may marry together?* Answer. If they be converted, they may: so *Moses* married *Jethro*[e]s daughter, *Salomon Rahab*, and *Boaz Ruth* heere, and *Sheshan* married his daughter to his servant an Egyptian <1 Chron. 2.34<sup>172</sup>>: but otherwise they may not;<sup>173</sup> God forbad it his people; such matches were condemned <See Z[e]pper,<sup>174</sup> de Lege Mosaica liber 4 caput 18,<sup>175</sup> Deut. 7.3;<sup>176</sup> Ezra 10;<sup>177</sup> Neh. 13<sup>178</sup>>; the Yoke is unequall, as Saint *Paul* speaketh <2 Cor. 6.14>: it was reprov'd in *Esau*, and herein was hee a grieffe unto his parents <Gen. 27<sup>179</sup>>. This is not to marry in the Lord; it is dangerous to the soule, if the heart should bee drawne from [p. 402] God, as was *Salomons* <1 Kings 11.1;<sup>180</sup> Neh. 13.26; Deut. 4.7<sup>181</sup>>; and such matches hath God cursed, as we may see in *Jehoshaphat* matching his sonne with *Ahabs* daughter; it had almost rooted out his whole House <2 Chron. 19.2 and 21.6, 13<sup>182</sup>>. Fathers and

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<sup>172</sup> Verse 35 is also relevant.

<sup>173</sup> Here, at the conclusion of the marriage transaction, Bernard finally explicitly addresses the question of whether Boaz should have married Ruth, given that she was a Moabite woman. Although he touches on this question in chapter 1 on p. 28 (there also giving the explanation that Ruth was a believer), he avoids it in chapter 2 on pp. 151-152, 153 and pp. 193-4. Evidently, Bernard is troubled by the question, but perhaps, as has been suggested editorially respecting p. 152, recognises that raising it goes against the ethos of *Ruth*. He does so here when there is no doubt that the marriage is approved in the biblical narrative, and he can dismiss his misgivings with the explanation that Ruth was a convert.

<sup>174</sup> The 1628 edition has 'Zipper' rather than 'Zepper'.

<sup>175</sup> Wilhelm Zepper, *Legum Mosaicarum Forensium Explanatio*. Book 4 chapter 18 (pp. 452-82) deals with issues of sexual morality. Mixed marriages are condemned on pp. 475-7.

<sup>176</sup> Verse 4 is also relevant.

<sup>177</sup> The whole chapter is relevant.

<sup>178</sup> Specifically, verses 23-30.

<sup>179</sup> Although Gen. 27.46 has some relevance, the correct reference is evidently Gen. 26.34-5.

<sup>180</sup> Verses 2-8 are also relevant.

<sup>181</sup> The correct reference is probably Deut. 4.3. See Num. 25.

<sup>182</sup> See the note on p. 28 about the reference 2 Chron. 21.6, which Bernard cites there regarding intermarriage when he addresses this issue in connection with the marriages of Naomi's sons. Jehoshaphat's arrangement of his son's marriage is alluded to in 2 Chron. 18.1 as well as in 2 Chron. 19.2, cited here. 2 Chron. 21.13, the last of this group of references, is part of the introduction of Elijah's statement regarding the punishment of Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat. However, verses 14-19 are also relevant as they state the declaration by Elijah of the punishment and its subsequent execution.

Councils doe condemne it, and therefore beware of making such matches.

*The wife of Mahlon.*] See for this before, Chapter 1.4 and in this Chapter verse the 5, where *Ruth* is called the wife of the dead, and here shewed to bee *Mahlon* the Elder brother to *Chilion* the husband of *Orpha*, who by her apostasie lost her blessing in Israel, which *Ruth* obtained by her constancie.

*Have I purchased to be my wife.*] We see hence, *a good man will be at cost to obtaine a good wife*: *Abraham* will send farre a messenger to this purpose with Camels loaden, and with Jewels of silver and gold <Gen. 24<sup>183</sup>>. *Jacob* will serve seven yeeres and seven too, but he will have *Rachel* <Hos. 12.12; Gen. 28 and 29>; *Boaz* here will purchase a poore *Ruth* for her vertues: for indeed a vertuous womans price is above Rubies <Prov. 31<sup>184</sup>>, shee will doe her husband good all his dayes, shee is worthy therefore the getting, and worthy to bee honestly maintained: and yet wee see most care least for such an one, but they will labour and spare no cost to get one that is faire, though beautie be deceitfull vanity <Prov. 31.30>, and sometime such a one not over-honest; or one rich, loving the portion better than the partie,<sup>185</sup> marrying basely, and after living discontentedly; or for birth and friends, when the one lifteth up the heart with pride, and the other becommeth chargeable. [p. 403] Beautie maketh not blessed, but vertue; not goods, but grace; not naturall generation, but spirituall regeneration; not friends heere, but the sweet favour of God, which hee onely affordeth unto the vertuous. See further from hence the love of *Naomi* to *Ruth*, who giveth her right to *Boaz* to redeeme the land for advancement of *Ruth*: for *loving parents will doe much for the preferment of their children*. *Naomi* heere liveth

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<sup>183</sup> Specifically, verses 10, 22, 53.

<sup>184</sup> Specifically, verse 10.

<sup>185</sup> 'party': 'With modifying word (as *good*, *desirable*, etc.): a match or offer; a prospective partner in marriage.' (OEDQ).

unmarried, shee doth all shee may to get *Ruth* a good match, for her owne sake, and in love to the dead, that of her may be gotten one to beare the name of the dead, as *Boaz* speaketh in the words following. Which honest and loving care of *Naomi* checketh such widdowes, as being well left by the dead, doe, either of covetousnesse and carelesnesse, neglect to marry their children, living onely for themselves; or else of a wanton lust doe cast themselves away upon such as will both undoe them and their children.

*To raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance.*] Of these words somewhat is spoken before on verse the 5<sup>186</sup> which I will not repeat. Here *Boaz* alledgeth these words as a reason of his marrying this young woman; they are the words of the Law in Deuteronomie, and so are the next following <Deut. 25.6-7>; to which Law *Boaz* had respect in thus matching with *Ruth*: from whom we learne these things; First, that *a wise man will prevent an offence, which by others might bee taken at him, when hee considers the occasion thereof*: for *Boaz* telleth them the true ends of his marrying thus, lest the [p. 404] Beholders and Hearers should have censured ill of him, as of lecherie, he being old, and she yong; or of folly, she being poore, and he rich; she base, and he honourable; or of an inclining in her to idolatry, he being an Israelite, and shee a daughter of Moab, of that race, which inticed Israel to sinne, and brought a great judgement upon the people <Num. 25<sup>187</sup>>. And this hee did for the care and credit of his name, which is highly to be esteemed <Eccles. 7.1; Prov. 22.1>, and in love unto those there gathered before him, in whom hee would prevent the offence, which on their behalfe might be taken, though not on his part given. And thus must wee learne to doe: both to beware of offences to all sorts; and

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<sup>186</sup> See pp. 374-7.

<sup>187</sup> Specifically, verses 1-5.

also where wee perceive that any might take an offence, there wisely to prevent it in them, if wee can <1 Cor. 10.32; Matt. 18<sup>188</sup>>, and not bee like such as give themselves to all licentious libertie to live as they list, as almost every one doth in these dayes, not caring for a good name of a grave and sober Christian, or of adorning their holy profession, or of displeasing the godly minds of others; but to live onely like Libertines after their owne lusts, opening the mouthes of the Adversaries to speake ill of the Gospell of God. Secondly, from *Boaz* wee may learne, that *a godly man in his marrying is guided by Gods Law, and hath respect unto Gods good pleasure therein*: so had *Abraham* in matching his sonne *Isaac*, and *Isaac* in marrying of his sonne *Jacob*: for such as be godly, make the Lords Will and Word their Rule in all things, much more in a matter of this weight and consequence; they know it [p. 405] to be Gods ordinance, and therefore will advise with God about it: yea, they know that God hath not left men herein to their liberty and lust, to marry as they like best; but hath limited them, and in his Word hath taught them with whom, how, and to what end to marry. And therefore in marrying we must be ruled by the Lord, which will appeare by these things: If we see what calling wee have to marry, before wee enter into this troublesome estate, as Reason and Religion should perswade us; If we see that wee have a just cause to marry, then to consider with whom God alloweth us to marry; If we seeke out such a one, as not onely with whom we may marry lawfully, but also fitly: and therefore to pray earnestly to God for such a one: for God maketh fit matches <Gen. 2<sup>189</sup>>; and a vertuous woman is his gift. It is a happy thing to match fitly, and more hard then to match lawfully. If lastly, we use marriage as God hath appointed, for increase of posterity, and to avoid

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<sup>188</sup> Specifically, verse 7.

<sup>189</sup> Specifically, verse 18.

fornication, the first end was before the fall, the latter after <Gen. 2;<sup>190</sup> 1 Cor. 7<sup>191</sup>>; and withall for mutuall society, helpe and comfort, which one ought to have with another: which cannot be, except there bee fitnessse, grace, true love, humilitie and patience. But who are thus led by the Lord in their marrying? Men seeke wives now without any respect to Gods will and pleasure: they follow the lusts of the eyes, the lusts of the flesh, and pride of life. Thirdly, we may observe how *the vertuous are to match so, as they may raise up a seed of the righteous among Gods people*: for the preservation [p. 406] of the Church and Religion, as *Boaz* heere had a care to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance. But this cannot the married doe, except they themselves be true Lovers of goodnesse, and have a speciall care to traine up their children religiously, first, in knowledge of God, else are they Atheists; of the true God, else Heathenish Idolaters; and of the true worship of this God, else but will-worshippers: then to enforme them in the Doctrine of faith, without which grace they can never profit by the Word, nor ever please God <Heb. 4.2 and 11.6>; the summe of which beliefe is set downe in the Articles of our Creed. Next, to teach them how to pray aright; which is the meanes to conferre with God, to speake to him, to obtaine blessings from him, and without the practice whereof men are but as beasts, and a marke of such as thinke there is no God <Ps. 14<sup>192</sup>>. The summe of our prayer, and the perfect rule of direction for matter, and manner, and end, is set downe by our Saviour Christ. Lastly, to teach them obedience, and to walke in Gods Commandements, without which, all knowledge and faith is vaine <1 John 2.4; Jas. 2>: the summe of what we are to obey, is in the ten Commandements, which children must be taught and instructed in. Here may bee noted this also from the words, that

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<sup>190</sup> The correct reference is Gen. 1.28.

<sup>191</sup> Specifically, verse 2.

<sup>192</sup> Specifically, verse 1.

*the dead doe live againe, as it were in their posterity, which keepe their inheritance:* for children and the preservation of their fathers inheritance, doe keepe alive the name of the dead. Therefore let children have a care hereof, lest they destroy the name of the [p. 407] dead, as many prodigall children doe.

*That the name of the dead bee not cut off from among his brethren.*] This is another end, the other being the meanes to prevent this: for the raising up of the name of the dead, preventeth the cutting of it off from among the brethren. Concerning the word *brethren*, hereby is meant others than very naturall brethren: for the people of God before and under the Law, as in the Primitive Church under the Gospell, were wont to call one another brethren, of which I have spoken before out of the third verse.<sup>193</sup> For *cutting off*: this may bee when one will not marry to have children, or marrying, are not blessed of God with children, or having children, are cut off by Gods just judgement, and so the name perisheth, as it befell *Jeroboam* <1 Kings 14.10>, *Ahab* <2 Kings 9.8>, *Jehoiakim* <Jer. 22.30<sup>194</sup> and 36.30>, and as God doth threaten the obstinate sinner in Deuteronomie <Deut. 29.18-19<sup>195</sup>>. Howsoever this cutting off be of posterity, we may learne hence, that *the decay of posteritie, is a cutting off of a mans name from among his brethren*, as the words heere and in the Law <Deut. 25.6> imply. And therefore let people pray for this blessing of marriage, and thanke God for their posterity and fruit of the wombe. *Abraham* most highly esteemed hereof <Gen. 15.2<sup>196</sup>>; and the Psalmist maketh it a reward to such as feare God <Ps. 127.3 and 128.3>: yea, children are a crowne to the old men; and it was a heavy curse upon *Jehoiakim* to be made childlesse <Jer. 36.30 and 22.30>; and it was

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<sup>193</sup> See pp. 360-1.

<sup>194</sup> Bernard gives this reference on p. 375. See the note there.

<sup>195</sup> Verse 20 is also relevant.

<sup>196</sup> Verses 3-6 are also relevant.



threatned in the Law as a punishment for sinne <Lev. 20.20>. They be much to blame then, which do marry of purpose with such as they thinke are past bearing [p. 408] of children, or with others apt for children, but yet in heart desire to have none, or perhaps but one or two, rather to dally with, than to be troubled with: but such children often prove a scourge to these parents, through their foolish affection and too great indulgencie, because they have no more.<sup>197</sup>

*And from the gate of his place.]* These words shew that *Elimelech* was a man of authority among them, an Elder and Judge in the Gate, which honour *Boaz* would uphold in marrying with *Ruth*, that his name might not bee cut off from the place of authority, heere understood by the Gate. *Good men seeke to uphold the honour, and to preserve the dignitie of one another*, as the fifth Commandement teacheth: which being our duety, wee must care to observe, both to the dead and to the living. To the dead, as *Boaz* doth heere: now their honour we preserve, when we speake of them with honour, as *David* did of *Abner* <2 Sam. 3<sup>198</sup>>; when wee maintaine their good name against calumnies and slanderous reports; and when we imitate their vertues,

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<sup>197</sup> Here, Bernard engages with the subject of family limitation. The importance he attaches to this subject is evident in that he returns to it in his exposition of ‘*Like Rachel and Leah*’ in verse 11. Bernard’s comments are evidently written in opposition to Topsell’s views on family limitation (see the Introduction section 4.2.2). Topsell’s views which Bernard objects to are definitely expressed only after a more conventional discussion. Topsell touches on the subject in his exposition of verse 10. He declares that as the levirate law provided for the increase of God’s people, so amongst the Gentiles, everyone should bring ‘one infant or other’ to the faith (245). He explains his meaning in his exposition of verse 11. Although he concludes from the people’s and elders’ prayer in this verse that the blessing of marriage is numerous children (256), he subsequently points out the disadvantages of this in the miserable time he lives in (257-8). Topsell goes on to urge better conduct in people for the sake of their posterity (258) and subsequently makes an argument which reinforces the point in connection with verse 10 mentioned above. The progeny of Rachel and Leah were faithful. Marriage should create many members of the Church (260-1). He then begins unambiguously to state his case for limited families, drawing on natural history, as noted in the Introduction section 4.2.2.

The issue of family limitation does not arise in Lavater, although he does derive a contemporary observation from the elders and people wishing Boaz and Ruth many children (according to his interpretation of verses 11 and 12) (137r-138r). He notes that in the Old Testament it was held a blessing to have many children, but comments that degenerate children are a curse rather than a blessing whereas holy children are to be desired (138r-138v). This finds an echo in Topsell’s argument.

<sup>198</sup> Specifically, verse 38.

and seeke to uphold their posterity, especially when they shall deserve well, and follow the steps of the dead in well-doing. Thus shall wee truely and with praise preserve their honour, though we doe not as the Papists dedicate dayes in honour of them, and make them Intercessours to God for us, to the great dishonour of Christ. And as we should maintaine the honour of the dead, so should wee the honour of the living, by acknowledging their dignity, in [p. 409] age, place and gifts; by speaking thereof as is meet, without envy or disdaine, and by doing reverence in our outward behaviour according to their dignity. Heere may also bee noted, that *men of place and authority may soone leave their family in a low estate*: for *Elimelechs* wife was poore *Naomi*, and glad of the helpe of her daughter in lawes gleanings. How poore was the widdow left, for whose reliefe the Prophet *Elisha* wrought a miracle <2 Kings 4<sup>199</sup>>, being, as is supposed by some, the wife of an honourable man, *Obadiah*, *Ahabs* Steward, who did feed an hundred Prophets of God in Caves, in the time of famine <1 Kings 18.3<sup>200</sup>>? This may fall out sometime by Gods hand in punishing the fathers, that they can leave nothing to children; sometime for triall, as in *Jobs* case, who was brought to great misery; and sometime a mans owne doings may bring him under the power of authority, which may justly deprive him of his honor and estate, as it befell *Abiathar* in the daies of *Salomon* <1 Kings 2.26-7>. Let not men bee therefore proud of their parents present glory; an alteration may soone come, as we see in *Jeroboam* and *Baasha*, in *Ahab*, *Jehoram*, and *Jezabel*; in *Haman* also, *Athaliah*, and others: for Gods power, Princes authority, and a mans owne way, may soone bring downe his greatnesse, and also a ruine upon his whole house <Ps. 75.6-7>.

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<sup>199</sup> Specifically, verses 1-7.

<sup>200</sup> Verse 4 is also relevant.

*Yee are witnesses.*] That is, as if *Boaz* had said, not onely of the sale and purchase of the land, but also of this my marriage with this yong woman, *Ruth*: which here we see to be publike, and in the [p. 410] Gate of the Citie, in a civill Court and place of justice. Whence [n]ote, First, that *marriages are to be made publikely before sufficient witnesses*, as was *Jacobs*,<sup>201</sup> this here, and that to which our Saviour was bidden <John 2<sup>202</sup>>. This is fit for the honour of marriage, for the better ratification thereof, and to prevent pretences of marriages: for if marriages were not publike, but privately huddled up, some might pretend marriage, and live together as man and wife in shew, and yet be but lewd livers: so others wearie of one another, might say they were not married, and so unlawfully separate themselves. Therefore let marriages be publike, and in a publike place, as here it was, and as now by our Lawes we bee bound thereto; and avoid private making of marriages, and in corners, for they are often made in haste, and end unhappily. Secondly, that *marriage in old time was onely a civill action*: there was no need of a Minister to make it, it was lawfully and sufficiently done, when it was made openly, by such as might marry, among the people, as we may see in the marriage of *Isaac*, of *Jacob*, *Esau*, *Samson*.<sup>203</sup> Which confuteth the Papists that make marriage a Sacrament, as if marriage were onely lawfull in the Church, and not among the very heathen: when yet from the beginning it is common to all mankind, and allowed to all sorts. True it is, that we doe make such marriages lawfull onely when ministers make them, but this is not with a papisticall opinion of a Sacrament, nor for that our Church condemneth marriages otherwise made [p. 411] in other nations, as unlawfull, but the

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<sup>201</sup> See Gen. 29.22.

<sup>202</sup> Specifically, verses 1-2.

<sup>203</sup> There is no mention of public participation in the marriages of Isaac and Esau. Samson did make a feast (see Judg. 14.10).

Church and State have so ordained, for the greater reverence to Gods ordinance, when his Ministers shall blesse the same, in the publike Congregation, with the prayers of the Church; and when they shall teach them their dueties, which doe marry: Thus gracing Gods holy ordinance by their praying and preaching, the one for benediction, the other for instruction, and therefore worthily ordained, and so of us to be religiously observed.<sup>204</sup>

Verse 11. *And all the people that were in the Gate, and the Elders said, We are witnesses: The Lord make the woman that is come into thine house, like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: And doe thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Bethlehem.*

The Assembly make answer unto *Boaz*: first, acknowledging themselves to bee witnesses; and then praying for a blessing upon the woman, and then upon him: that shee may be lovely and fruitfull, and he to doe so worthily, that hee may come to be renowned.

*And all the people that were in the Gate, and the Elders said.]* In so great a company (no doubt) differing in nature and conditions, yet wee see heere how they doe all agree before *Boaz* to applaud him; may it be imagined, that none had a by-

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<sup>204</sup> In this passage Bernard justifies Protestant marriage procedures by relating them to biblical examples. He retains Lavater's emphasis on the importance of marriages being public, as was that of Boaz (*Lavater* 134v-136r), but also follows Topsell in observing that holding weddings in church differs from early practice (*Topsell* 237-8). According to Bernard and Topsell, marriage is no sacrament, as Roman Catholics claim, but, as Bernard expresses it, church weddings have been ordained by the church and state for the greater reverence of the ordinance of God (*Topsell* 238, 237). Bernard explains by emphasising firstly the importance of prayer for the marrying couple, an emphasis also found in Lavater and Topsell (see *Lavater* 135v-136r, 141r-142r; *Topsell* 237, 255-6) and again expressed by himself on pp. 414-15. Secondly, Bernard stresses the importance of preaching at church weddings. The characteristic Protestant practice of preaching at marriages is illustrated by the marriage sermons of Thomas Gataker, *A Good Wife Gods Gift* (1620) and *A Wife in Deed* (1623).

thought to see an old man to marry a young woman, one rich and noble, to take a poore and [p. 412] meane maiden? Yet before him all say well unto it: for *great men have to their faces great countenance and applause of the people, in that they take in hand*. The people will like all that *David* doth <2 Sam. 3.36>: so will foure hundred prophets allow of *Ahabs* purpose to goe to battell against the Syrians to recover Ramoth-Gilead: for people feare to offend, they desire to please their betters. And therefore this should teach those of place and wealth, upon whom many doe depend, to take heed what they doe: for they may set others on to godlinesse, and they may move others unto wickednesse; they cannot fall themselves alone, but be like the great Dragon, with their taile pulling many downe with them <Rev. 12<sup>205</sup>>. Let *David* set up Religion, multitudes will follow him to the House of God. Let *Jeroboam* set up Idols and Devils, the Israelites will worship them. Let *Ahab* worship *Baal*, all will doe so; and let *Jehu* destroy him, and they will helpe him to doe it. People are like a shaddow, following authority; like waxe also, which will take any print. In themselves are nothing, but allow and disallow, as they see great Ones doe before them. And therefore let no men of place regard their applause, thinking that well done, which the Vulgars approve or flattering dependants: for they will not speake as the truth is, but to humour persons; not what they thinke to be right, but what they know another liketh of, and would have them say.

*Wee are witnesses.*] That is, wee acknowledge [p. 413] our selves to bee so as thou sayest, wee are witnesses, and will upon any just occasion bee ready to shew our selves so. Whence note, that *what men are called to witnesse, being either eye or eare witnesses thereof, or both, that should they bee ready to testifie*, as these heere

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<sup>205</sup> Specifically, verses 3-4.

professe themselves to bee, and as did the Israelites, in the behalfe of *Samuel*, before the Lords Anoynted <1 Sam. 12.4[-]5>. *A faithfull witnesse*, saith *Salomon*, *will not lye*.<sup>206</sup> And therefore let us in such a case bee ready and faithfull witnesses, for the truth sake, for justice and peace sake among our brethren. Many times ready and faithfull witnesses prevent suites, and keepe peace, where otherwise there would be strife and contention. This reproveth those, which being able sufficiently to beare witnesse, yet for feare of displeasing will not; these want fervent love of the truth, and offend against the Commandements, which bind men to preserve the dignitie, life, chastity, goods and good name of our Neighbours. Now, if any of these be endangered, and wee by our witnesse might set them free, and will not, we are guiltie thereof. Againe, this checketh, or rather condemneth those that for favour will either adde or detract in their witnesse-bearing, so seeking to please man, and to displease God, giving a deadly wound to their owne consciences. Thirdly, such as doe speake onely what is done and said, but yet to another end and meaning than was intended, as *Doeg* dealt with *Ahimelech*, and the false witnesses against Christ. These wicked persons sinne against the Commandement <Exod. 20<sup>207</sup>>, [p. 414] they trespasse in one of the seven sinnes, which GOD hateth, and are an abomination to the LORD <Prov. 6.19 and 12.22>, who ordained in the Law a punishment answerable to that, which by their false witnesse should have beene inflicted upon another <Deut. 19.16, 19>. Such God threatneth to punish <Prov. 19.9>: for they offend greatly, they hinder the true course of justice, they deceive the Judge, they hurt their Neighbour, and they abuse the holy Name of God, which they call to witnesse falsely. Let men therefore take heed hereof.

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<sup>206</sup> See Prov. 14.5.

<sup>207</sup> Specifically, verse 16.

*The Lord make the woman.*] Here they begin to pray for them, and all joyntly together. Of praying to God I have before spoken;<sup>208</sup> here farther may be observed, First, that *marriage is to be solemnized with prayer, and others are to pray for the married parties*: as these doe heere, and *Bethuel, Laban* and her mother did for *Rebecca* <Gen. 24.60>, and as our Church ordaineth now at marriages; and that for these three causes: First, for the *holinesse* of the action, being Gods holy ordinance, and an honorable estate instituted in Paradise, and in the time of innocencie, and to be therefore undertaken holily and reverently with supplication and prayer unto God. Next, for the *unholinesse* of our persons in our selves, who by our corruption pollute the ordinance of God, and as wee bee of *Adams* race, so have we our children conceived in sinne, and brought forth in iniquity, and beget such as be after our owne likenesse <Gen. 5<sup>209</sup>>: wee have cause then to pray, and that fervently to God to blesse and shew mercy unto us. And thirdly, for [p. 415] the *troublesomenesse* of the estate of marriage, which may cause us to pray heartily: for it is full of temptations and trials. And therefore let it move us to pray for them, after the example of the people here and these Elders; and not be like such, as at the time of marriage onely stand staring and looking on, or through vaine thoughts, doe laugh and make a sport thereof, or else spend their thoughts upon the delight of future vanities, dauncing, drinking, lewd songs and ribaldrie, more heathenish than Christian-like. And if others are to pray for the married parties, then much more should they pray for themselves: but alas, how farre are most from it, having their thoughts spent upon vanities? Secondly note, that *in publike prayer the Assembly should bee of one accord*: as all these were heere, both the Elders and people, as also

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<sup>208</sup> See pp. 48-9, 51, 53-4, 145-7, 180, 181-2, 183, 224-5, 228-9, 284-5, 406.

<sup>209</sup> Specifically, verse 3.

elsewhere <2 Chron. 5.13; Neh. 8;<sup>210</sup> Acts 1.14 and 2.46 and 4.24>. This is unitie, and the other confusion, when people are otherwise exercised than in giving their assent to that which is publikely performed.

*That is come into thine house.*] That is either already come, or that certainly shall come, as if shee were already in the house. This sheweth the *cohabitation of man and wife, and that they are to dwell together*, as *Peter* speaketh <1 Pet. 3.7; 1 Cor. 7.5>: and God placed the first man and wife together in Paradise; and *Abraham* and *Sarah* lived together; so did *Isaac* and *Rebecca*, *Jacob* and his wives; and so did *David* with his <2 Sam. 6.20>. And this is fit and necessary for mutuall comfort and society, therefore the Apostles tooke their wives with them <1 Cor. 9.5>: and it is for [p. 416] this cause altogether a fault, when any wilfully live separated from their wives, or any unnecessarily without a calling, out of an idle levity, will become Travellers into other countries after they bee married: when the Apostle warneth them not to defraud one another, except with consent, and that but for a time, and for this end, to give themselves to fasting and prayer, and then come together againe, lest Satan tempt them to incontinencie.<sup>211</sup>

*Like Rachel and Leah.*] *Rachel* is first named, because shee was *Jacobs* wife first by covenant, and his best beloved. Two wives he had: and *it was and is lawfull to have one wife after another*: as *Abraham* had *Keturah* after *Sarah*: for they that cannot abstaine, it is better to marry, than to burne <1 Cor. 7.9, 36>; and when the one is departed, the other is free to marry againe in the Lord. And therefore it is an hereticall opinion to forbid second marriages, which the godly practised, and the Apostle alloweth upon good reasons. But *to have two wives at once is not lawfull*:

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<sup>210</sup> Specifically, verse 6.

<sup>211</sup> See 1 Cor. 7.5.



for it is contrary to the Lords first institution of marriage, who joynd together but one man and one woman <Gen. 2<sup>212</sup>>: it is against the Apostles Doctrine, who teacheth every man to have his owne wife, and every woman her owne husband <1 Cor. 7<sup>213</sup>>. And wee may reade of the first offenders, how one was out of the Church a blasphemous *Lamech*, and the other in the Church a prophane *Esau* <Gen. 4<sup>214</sup> and 26.34>. And albeit holy men had many wives, it was their fault; God onely being pleased to passe it over in his mercie: but [p. 417] allow thereof hee did not, as appeareth by the Prophet *Malachies* words <Mal. 2.15>: And therefore are they not herein to bee followed.<sup>215</sup> It is a blessed Law, which of late time hath beene enacted in this Nation, against marrying two wives at once.<sup>216</sup> In praying that *Ruth* might bee first like *Rachel*, who was amiable and lovely to *Jacob*; and then like *Leah*, who was fruitfull; they may seeme to pray for two things of the Lord: the first was, that there might bee true love and good liking betweene *Boaz* and *Ruth*: *for true love and good liking ought to bee betweene husband and wife specially*: so commanded, so practised by *Isaac*, and by *Elkanah*, and other godly men <Eph. 5.25; Col. 3.19; Gen. 24.67; 1 Sam. 1.5>; and it is that which maketh marriage comfortable, and the parties to live quietly together with mutuall contentment. Oh therefore let us pray for this love, and not onely pray, but endeavour to use the best meanes to procure and hold it! And to effect this, the married persons are to take heed of strange affections, which

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<sup>212</sup> Specifically, verses 21-24.

<sup>213</sup> Specifically, verse 2.

<sup>214</sup> Specifically, verses 19, 23-4.

<sup>215</sup> Mal. 2.15 does not seem a relevant argument against having many wives, since it concerns divorce as opposed to polygamy. Malachi is comparing Judah's going after strange gods to a man who has dealt treacherously with the wife of his youth. The verse is notoriously obscure, but Bernard may see the wife of thy youth – 'thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant' (Mal. 2.14) – as a man's first and only legitimate wife. To marry other women would be an act of treachery, as would divorce.

<sup>216</sup> Bigamy was first identified as a civil crime in 1604. See Sir James Fitzjames Stephen, *A History of the Criminal Law of England* (1883) 430. He assigns it to 1603, as the statute is dated according to the Julian calendar, where the new year begins at the end of March.

might alienate their minds one from another; then to behold rather the good qualities and vertues of one another, than the infirmities, and things to bee found fault with: for love covereth a multitude of offences. Young persons before marriage cannot see one anothers faults, and if they doe see them, yet their love is such as they can passe them by. Why, is not love in marriage as strong: nay, stronger, seeing now two are made one? *Isaac* tooke *Rebecca*, and shee was his wife, and he then loved her: but now men love their *Rebeccaes* afore [p. 418] marriage, and then taking them for wives, they hate them, or not love them as before. Moreover, the married parties are to bee ready to performe mutuall dueties cheerefully: yea, they are to strive which should be most loving in their dueties of love, and should also provoke one another thereto. Lastly, they should often thinke of the solemne covenant made betwixt them, and by that and other godly reasons presse themselves, the husband himselfe, and the wife her selfe, to their dueties: yea, they should bewaile their owne, and one anothers corruptions before God, and pray against them, and for Gods good graces to make them duetifully loving one to another: thus doing shall they, by Gods blessing, both procure and keepe love.<sup>217</sup> The second thing they prayed for, was the encrease of children, which was the first blessing to man and woman, when God had made them; and the first and principall end of marriage, and which God promised unto his people <Gen. 1.28; Zech. 8.5; Gen. 9.1>. In old time it was held a reproach for women to be barraine <Luke 1.25; 1 Sam. 1.26;<sup>218</sup> Lev. 20.20; Jer. 22.30; Gen. 20.18; 2 Sam. 6.23; Ps. 127<sup>219</sup> and 128<sup>220</sup>>; and the Lord did threaten it as a punishment: yea, and inflicted it upon some. Surely it is the want of a blessing, as

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<sup>217</sup> In this passage Bernard gives advice which comes within the remit of a matrimonial guide. (see Hull 47-56)

<sup>218</sup> The correct reference is probably 1 Sam. 1.6.

<sup>219</sup> Specifically, verses 3-5.

<sup>220</sup> Specifically, verses 3, 6.

the Psalmist teacheth. And therefore let us pray for this blessing, as *Abraham* did, *Isaac*, *Manoah*, and *Hannah*: from which these are farre, who so marry, as they might bee without hope of children; such also as murmur at Gods blessing, through unbeliefe, fearing not<sup>221</sup> to have to maintaine them, unlike *Leah*, who comforted her selfe and praised God for children <Gen. 29.32, 35<sup>222</sup>>. Some would have some one or [p. 419] two, as it were to play withall, or to inherite that they have, but many they cannot away with: but these are most to be condemned, who use meanes and medicines to prevent children, or sin in the sinne of *Onan*, whom the Lord slew: for it is murther before the Lord <Gen. 38.9>.<sup>223</sup> Lastly, from the prayer made to the Lord for love betweene them, and the encrease of children, wee may observe two other things: First, that *love betweene man and wife commeth of God, and is his gift*: for as the Psa[l]mist saith, it is God that maketh them that are in one house, to be of one mind: and therefore we ought to pray to him for it, and where it is, to praise him heartily for the same. Then, that *Children are the gift of God*: as may appeare by many Scriptures, and by the prayers made to God for them <Ps. 107.38 and 127<sup>224</sup> and 128,<sup>225</sup> Gen. 20.18 and 29.31 and 4.1 and 29.35<sup>226</sup>>. And therefore must we acknowledge them from God, as *Eve* did, and *Leah*; if wee want them, pray to him for them, as *Hannah* and others did, and then care to bring them up well, and dedicate them to Gods service in some lawfull calling, in thankfulnesse for his so great a mercy.

*Which two did build the house of Israel.]* That is, God made them fruitfull to

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<sup>221</sup> 'not' is a misprint. It should not be in the sentence.

<sup>222</sup> Verses 32-5 are relevant.

<sup>223</sup> Here, Bernard returns to the topic of family limitation, which he addressed on pp. 407-8. See the Introduction section 4.2.2.

<sup>224</sup> Specifically, verses 3-5.

<sup>225</sup> Specifically, verses 3, 6.

<sup>226</sup> Verses 31-4 are also relevant.

bring forth to *Jacob* a familie, of whom came the Israelites the peculiar people of God. They two are onely mentioned, their maids are left out, but understood in them: for that they were the wives gift unto *Jacob* to beare children for them, when they bare not. They are said to build the house, when they brought forth children; which Metaphore is [p. 420] used, because in Hebrew the name of a sonne commeth from a word which signifieth to build <ben, banah>: so as the bringing forth of children, is as the building up of an house, by which a familie is named for the cohabitation of man and wife together: so wee call our kindred and stocke, our house. Note here howsoever men have the name of the house, and by them commeth the posteritie to be honourable, yet are *women the builders up of the house, and are the especiall instruments of the encrease of posterity*: for when men had no children, it is said, The women were barraine, and their wombs shut up; and when men had any, it is said, The Lord gave the women to conceive. In them therefore is either the encrease or decay of posterity, yet both from God, as hee either pleaseth to blesse or to deny the blessing. By *Israel* is meant *Jacob*; touching which name of *Israel*, note these three things: the change of the name by God himselfe, to comfort *Jacob* in great feare for his brothers comming against him, and to shew his more excellent estate then before <Gen. 32.28 and 35.10>: for the change of a name, was to expresse a more happy condition, as may appeare in a new name promised to the Church <Isa. 62.2>, and given also to *Abraham* <Gen. 17.5, 15>: and here before *Jacobs* name was called *Israel*, it is said, The Lord blessed him, and gave him the name, so as with the change of the name, was the change of his estate foretold <Gen. 32.26-8>. The signification of this name, which is the next thing, is, prevailing with God <Gen.

32.28>: whence wee in Christ are called, The *Israel* of God <Gal. 6<sup>227</sup>>: for that we prevaile [p. 421] with him through Christ. The third thing is the event according to the name, for hee prevailed against *Esau* by Gods mercy: for though hee came against him with foure hundred men, yet was his heart so mollified at the sight of his brother, as hee with teares embraced him for joy of their meeting; and afterwards when *Jacob* was in Canaan, *Esau* gave way unto him, and went into Edom, and left him the Land <Gen. 33.4 and 36.6<sup>228</sup>>. Thus God made good his Promise to *Jacob*, and made him *Israel*, a true Prevailer: for God giveth no signes to his children, but he maketh the same good in the effects, and the event answerable thereunto. So much for the words: but in this that these Elders and people doe pray for a blessing of children, from the consideration of Gods former mercies to others; and also doe take their example from such as did build up Israel, Gods Church; and not Babel; Bethel, and not Bethaven,<sup>229</sup> we may learne; First, that *Gods blessings to others before us, are a motive to us that come after, to beg the like blessings in the like case from God, reserving to himselfe his good pleasure and will*, which, in asking the commo[n] blessings of the world, is ever the condition either to bee expressed or understood: for Gods mercies shewed to others, are not onely for their present good which receive them, but to shew how ready the Lord is to shew the like mercie to others, if they themselves by their sinnes hinder not the same. Therefore let us consider of Gods mercies to others, to bee thereby encouraged to aske the like of God [p. 422] for our selves in the like case, with submission to Gods good will and pleasure. Secondly, that *such children are to be desired, as may bee to build up Israel*, that is,

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<sup>227</sup> Specifically, verse 16.

<sup>228</sup> Verses 7 and 8 are also relevant.

<sup>229</sup> Bethaven means House of Wickedness and was Hosea's name for Bethel (House of God). See Hos. 4.15 and 5.8 and 10.5.

Gods Church: such these pray for heere. This is the most happy blessing of the wombe; thus shall the wife bee as the pleasant Vine, and the children like Olive branches, which a man may behold with comfort: for by them God is glorified in his mercy, the Church encreased, parents comforted, and children made happy, sonnes being as Plants growing up, and the daughters as corner stones polished <Ps. 144.12>: these be the arrowes which make the man blessed that hath his quiver full of them <Ps. 127.5<sup>230</sup>>. But alas, how few desire such children? Most desire them for their name, for to possesse their inheritance after them, but not for the enlargement of Gods Church: for if so, we would not marry for meere pleasure, as many doe; or for the world, as not a few doe: but in the Lord with such as feare God, and so for Religion sake, and have a care to bring up our children in the knowledge of God, and not in the corrupt manners of the world, and fashions of the times, as most doe unto vanity; or but unto meere civility, as many doe, which are well accounted of, yet never bent their thoughts to true pietie in the education of their children.

*And doe thou worthily in Ephrata.] This Eph[r]ata is said to bee Bethlehem* <Gen. 35.19 and 48.7>; yet some distinguish them thus, as Ephratah to bee the countrey, and Bethlehem the City; the one signifying en- [p. 423] crease, the other the house of bread; which being so, it noteth that *where the countrey is fruitfull, and Ephrata increasing, there the townes and cites are Bethlehem, store-houses, and houses of bread.* So was it in Egypt in the dayes of *Joseph*: for the encrease of the field by Gods blessing in mans husbandry, maketh plentie of food in the places of our dwellings. Our meditation upon this should make us thankfull to God, who hath

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<sup>230</sup> Verse 4 is also relevant.

for a long time made our countrey and fields Ephrata, and our cities and townes Bethlehem.<sup>231</sup> And let us take heed of sinne, which will cause the Lord to turne our plenty into scarcity, and make a barren wilderness of our fruitful Land, for the wickednesse of us the Inhabitants which dwell in it <Ps. 107.33-4>: for wee doe greatly provoke him to wrath, in abusing his blessings to pride, idlenesse, gluttony, drunkennesse, whoredome, and want of mercy to the poore, as did wicked Sodom in her fulnesse. But let us take heed: for the Lord will not ever strive with us thus in mercie; his justice cannot ever suffer it.

The words, *doe thou worthily*, are read also thus, *get thee riches*; which may well stand, and may bee a fit request for *Boaz* and *Ruth* after they bee married and have increase of Children, teaching this, that *marriage needeth maintenance*, as we all know; for it is chargeable, and that in these respects, in housekeeping, in bringing up of Children, and in being liable to rates and seisments, according to the ability of the parties married. And therefore let such as intend to marry, provide [p. 424] honestly aforehand for the maintenance of marriage, as *Abraham* did for *Isaac* his sonne <Gen. 24<sup>232</sup>>, and not rush, through unbridled lust, as many young lads and lasses, poore and beggerly doe in these daies, to their owne hurt, and the putting of a burthen upon their neighbours, when they cannot maintaine their charge. If any have improvidently married, and now doe feelee the smart thereof, let them lay their hands to labour, and be the more painefull to get, to uphold their family, as *Jacob* did <Gen. 30<sup>233</sup>>; and if they be godly and faithfull in their labour and service, God will blesse them, as he did him, in their measure, and as he in his divine wisdom shall thinke meet for them. If we take the words as they be in the translation, *doe thou*

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<sup>231</sup> Bernard, as on p. 30, evidently refers to the absence of poor harvests in his society.

<sup>232</sup> The whole chapter is relevant.

<sup>233</sup> Specifically, verses 25-43.

*worthily*, let us note that a man may bee said to doe worthily in a double respect, either in respect of his person, when hee doth that which well befits him, according to his birth, his education, his age, his place, and his holy profession of a Christian, as men doe expect from such a one; or in respect of the deed done, when it is so done, as the vertues, which should concur to the doing thereof, doe lively appeare, and shew themselves in it. To apply this to riches, in the getting, keeping, and imployment of them, a man doth worthily, first, in the getting, when these vertues appeare; *industry*, painefully labouring, as *Jacob* did, *equity*, in using onely lawfull meanes lawfully, avoiding all fraud, deceit, and unjust courses to get riches: then *pietie*, which is a holy depending upon God for a blessing upon the lawfull meanes, [p. 425] which he daily begges at his hands, not resting upon his owne wit, or paines-taking: and lastly, *contentation*, not eagerly pursuing after riches <Heb. 13.5>, as most doe, who fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and noysome lusts, which drowne men in destruction and perdition <1 Tim. 6.9>. Secondly, in keeping, a man doth worthily, when therein is shewed *frugalitie*, a vertuous sparing, and not a niggardly keeping in, unbefitting his ability, his place and person; so also *equitie* even in this, when he will not withhold from another, that which is not his owne to keepe; for injustice may be as well in keeping, as in getting; and thirdly *pietie*, which is, when he sets not his heart on riches, trusts not in them, nor is lifted up above his brethren, but knoweth himselfe under God, in the midst of his wealth, walking therefore religiously and humbly, this man so doing, doth worthily. Thirdly, in imploying or laying out, hee doth worthily, when hee is liberall to good uses, for the good of Gods Church, as was *David*, and his Princes; and *Salomon* for the Temple; the Israelites before for the Tabernacle; and *Hezechias* and the people for



the Priests and Levites <2 Chron. 31.4-6, 8>: so for the Common-wealth, and place of his dwelling, and withall to lay out for his owne family, to maintaine himselfe, wife and children, as befitteth his place and after his ability; so to take care, and freely to give to nourish his whole family with food sufficient, not neglecting the poore, but to be ready to lend to some, and to give to other some, as their needfull estates shall [p. 426] require. Thus shall he by liberality and charity doe worthily in laying out.

*And bee famous.*] This well followeth after the other: They pray that he may doe worthily, and then become famous. *It is a duety to pray one for another, especially for men of authority, that they may doe worthily, and become renowned thereby* <Ps. 20; 1 Kings 1.37>: for their greater authority, and because their example of well-doing and fame therein will be a great meanes to perswade others to well-doing, or else a bridle to curb them for feare of offending: Let us then pray for men in place to do worthily, and to become thereby renowned, to provoke others to follow them, and that vertue may bee countenanced by them, as it will be by those, which be famous for vertue. Note againe, that *to doe worthily, procureth fame, and renowne, and good report*: so *David* became famous <2 Sam. 8.13>, and *Salomon* by his wisdom and acts <1 Kings 10.1; 2 Chron. 9.5>, and likewise others obtained good report <Heb. 11.2>; and the fame of our Saviour was spread abroad by his Life, Doctrine, and miracles; and even *Ruth* a poore woman and stranger, by her vertues was made knowne in Bethlehem <Chapter 3.11>. And this commeth to passe by the excellencie of well-doing in the minds of such as love it themselves, who cannot but in heart approve, and in tongue extoll it, and set forth the due praises of such as doe worthily. The Lord also putteth this blessing upon well-doing, that the Doers shall

receive honour and praise of men: so got *David* praises even above *Saul*, and was honoured by the commendations of his fact, before the [p. 427] King <1 Sam. 18.7>. Therefore when wee see men to doe worthily, let us set out their praises: for their incouragement, and to pricke forward others to well-doing, and not bee like the envious Scribes and Pharises seeking to diminish the honour of Christ; nor like *Saul*, who sought the life of *David*; and the Ephraimites, the destruction of *Jephte*, for their worthy deeds <Judg. 11 and 12<sup>234</sup>>: such a blacke poyson is envie, as it bedarkeneth the name of well-doers, as much as it can, rather than to make it famous.

*In Bethlehem.*] Heere is the place where they desire to have him famous, where he was brought up, where hee had his meanes to live, and place of authority; teaching heereby, that [*i*]t is there chiefly required for a man to doe worthily, where he oweth that duty: as where he hath beene brought up, where he hath his estate to live by, and where God hath seated him. So did our Saviour worthily in Nazareth <Luke 4.16-18<sup>235</sup>>, *Jephte* among the Gileadites: for their good and the well-fare of all Israel, if *Ephraim* had so taken it. This is a memorandum to Ministers, there to doe worthily, where God placeth them, and were they have their living, and not bee like some that can doe worthily abroad sometimes, but at home will take little or no paines to teach their people. This also should put Gentlemen and men of place, in mind to doe worthily in the countrey in good house-keeping among their Tenants, from whence they have their revenues; and not get up to Cities, there to keepe a private table, to encrease their estate, [p. 428] or else to uphold their pride.<sup>236</sup> Neither yet is it enough for men to dwell in the country, as divers doe, but doe not

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<sup>234</sup> Specifically, verse 1. Judg. 11 provides the context.

<sup>235</sup> Verse 19 is also relevant.

<sup>236</sup> This is evidence of the development of a commercial society, when gentlemen were leaving their estates for the city.

worthily, their Neighbours being never a whit the better for them, but are either so niggardly, as they benefit none, living onely to themselves, or else so prodigall, as they rob their Tenants with borrowing, and divers other wayes, both sorts overcharging them.

Verse 12. *And let thy house bee like the house of Pharez (whom Tamar bare unto Judah) of the seed, which the Lord shall give thee, of this young woman.*

These words be the third part of their prayer. They did first pray for the woman, as the builder of the house, as before it is said of *Rachel* and *Leah*. Next, for the man, because hee is the glory of the house; now for the posterity, because they doe continue it. Heere note what is prayed for, for an honourable posterity, set out by the house of *Pharez*, whose father and mother are mentioned; then, of whom it must come, and by whose gift and goodnesse.

*And let thy house.]* That is, thy children and posterity: so as they praying before for the parents, and now for the children, doe teach this, that *they which truly wish well in love to the parents, cannot but be well-minded to their children and posterity* <1 John 5.1>: so did *David* to *Mephibosheth* the sonne of *Jonathan*,<sup>237</sup> to *Chimham* the sonne of *Barzillai*, and to *Hanun* the sonne of the King of *Ammon* <2 Sam. 19<sup>238</sup> and 10<sup>239</sup>>: for [p. 429] how can wee love the fountaine, and not the streame? the roote, and not that which springeth from it? Let us trie hereby true love to parents, by the love we beare to their children.

*Be like the house of Pharez.]* *Pharez* signifieth a breach, because in the wombe

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<sup>237</sup> See 2 Sam.9.9-13 (Mephibosheth is also referred to in 2 Sam. 19.24-30).

<sup>238</sup> Specifically, verses 37-8.

<sup>239</sup> Specifically, verses 1-2.

he strove for the birth-right, and brake out before his brother *Zarah*, who had put out his hand to come first forth, to bee the first borne, but pluckt backe his hand againe.<sup>240</sup> *Zarah* may set out the Jewes, who were the first of Gods people, but by apostasie lost their birth-right; *Pharez* may set out the Gentiles, who made a breach upon them, and got the birth-right and the honour, to be called now the people of God. There bee two sorts of *Pharez*, one heavenly, which strive for to be of the first borne of God: this is a blessed striving which few contend for. There is another earthly, when brethren contend for to get the elder brothers inheritance from him, and doe labour to get him disinherited: the neglect of the former, is unholinesse; and the pursuing of the latter, is too great worldlinesse. These words, *To be like the house of Pharez*, give us to know, that he was greatly blessed and honorable in his posteritie, seeing they desire that *Boaz* house might bee like his. Now men wish not such a thing to great persons, but where there is an estate answerable to their greatnesse, and may well befit them, and be held a blessing unto them: and yet this *Pharez* was base gotten, and that in incest also. Whence wee may see, that *basely begotten may become very* [p. 430] *honorable*, so as it may bee happy with others to be blessed like them for worldly respects. Thus also was *Jephthe* honorable, a man of valor, made the head over all the inhabitants of Gilead, and yet the sonne of an Harlot <Judg. 11<sup>241</sup>>. Thus it pleaseth God to shew mercy on whom hee will shew mercy: which may comfort such as be base borne, that if they bewaile their birth, and repent and beleeve, the Lord will have mercy likewise on them, and register them in the beadroll of the Saints, as *Jephtah* is <Heb. 11<sup>242</sup>>. Againe, this may teach from these Elders and people, that *they are to be esteemed honorable, whom God doth make*

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<sup>240</sup> See Gen. 38.27-30.

<sup>241</sup> Specifically, verses 1-11.

<sup>242</sup> Specifically, verse 32.

*honorable*; for these speake highly of *Pharez* for all his birth; and the Gileadites thought worthily of *Jephtah*, and did him honor: yea, the holy Ghost hath vouchsafed to honor him, and to put him among the faithfull, though hee was by birth a bastard. They therefore doe amisse, who despise men for their birth, when otherwise they be worthily qualified, and better conditioned, then those perhaps which be more lawfully begotten. True it is, that a Bastard was not to come into the congregation for ten generations; but God can dispense with his Law, and where he so doth, let us doe them honor, and not debase whom the Lord exalteth.

*Whom Tamar bare unto Judah.*] *Judah* was one of *Jacobs* sonnes, and one of the twelve Patriarks, and begot this *Pharez* on this woman *Tamar*, who was his daughter in law: the history is in Gen. 38. Whence we may note briefly, That *great* [p. 431] *were the falls of many of the holy Patriarks*: as nine of them in the conspiracy against innocent *Joseph*, whose death they intended, because he told his father their ill report; for that also *Jacob* loved him more then all of them, and because he told them his dreame, for which they the more envied him, and were the more bent against him <Gen. 37.2-3, 11<sup>243</sup>>. But more particularly *Ruben* fell into that foule sinne, to lie with his Fathers Concubine.<sup>244</sup> *Simeon* and *Levi*, brethren in evill, who under colour of religion sought to revenge themselves, and abused the seale of Gods covenant to shead much blood;<sup>245</sup> and *Judah* here committeth incest with *Tamar*. Thus may we see, that *men of note, children of godly parents, and*

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<sup>243</sup> Verses 1-11 are relevant.

<sup>244</sup> See Gen. 35.22.

<sup>245</sup> See Gen. 34, which relates how, following the rape of Jacob's daughter Dinah by Shechem, the son of Hamor the Hivite, Jacob's sons agreed to intermarriage provided that circumcision was first performed. Just after the men had been circumcised and were sore, Simeon and Levi, two of Jacob's sons, attacked and killed Hamor and Shechem and all their men and spoiled their city. This was an act of deception and treachery which, as Jacob said, would make him stink amongst the surrounding people (see verse 30). Jacob condemned Simeon and Levi for this deed shortly before he died (see Gen. 49.5-7).

*pillars of the Church may fall very fearefully*, as may also appeare besides these in *Aaron*, in *Samson*, *Abiathar*, *David*, *Salomon*, and many others. Such is the strength of corruption, when we are left of God; and therefore are we to feare and to looke to our standing; watch and pray continually, lest we fall into temptation and bee overcome. And also wee may observe how *Jesus Christ was contented to come of such as were tainted with foule vices*, as of men stained and polluted, with incest, as *Judah*; with adultery, and murther, as *David*; with idolatry, as *Ahaz*; with witchcraft and sorcery, as *Manasses*; so of women defiled, as of this *Tamar*, of *Rahab* the harlot, and of *Bathsheba*, which sinned in adultery with *David*: to shew hereby, that he *our blessed Saviour came into the world to save sinners* <1 Tim. 1.15>; which is for the comfort of the penitent. And here also [p. 432] such as be godly, may learne not to be discouraged, not to be daunted, neither to account worse of themselves, because they have had of their kinred fouly tainted with vices. We see here the innocent Lambe of God to have been of such, and yet he the Holy one of Israel. Let such then put themselves to silence, who seeke to disgrace the well-deserving, by the staine of Ancestors or some of their kinred. By thus doing, men should offer wrong to Jesus Christ, which every Saint of God is very farre from: and who is hee that should not bee disgraced, if this might serve to disgrace a man? Note farther, how these words come in by a parenthesis: whether uttered by the Elders and people, or else put in by the Pen-man of the holy Ghost, it is not materiall: but heere we see, how God would have a remembrance of the birth of *Pharez*, with his honour and outward blessings from God: for *that it is good in our great glory and outward prosperity, to be put in mind whence wee be*. Thus God put *David* in remembrance

<2 Sam. 7.8> and *Jeroboam*.<sup>246</sup> for so such persons shall have cause to praise God for his mercies, and bee kept humble, and not forget themselves, as men commonly doe in their peace and prosperity. Let such then as bee raised up from a low estate, remember whence they are, and bee willing to heare thereof from others: for Gods mercie shall be the more knowne, admired, and glorified, whose praise wee must seeke with the very utter contempt of our selves, if so the case shall require. How great a signe of pride is it then, and [p. 433] of a will to obscure Gods mercies, when men will chafe in themselves against such as shall mention their meane or base birth?<sup>247</sup> But if men may not forget whence they be in their worldly advancement; then may wee not forget our naturall birth in our spirituall exaltation, when wee bee made the children of God, Kings and Priests to him, of children of wrath, and bond slaves to Satan. If the remembrance of the other put us in minde of Gods mercy, much more this: for betweene them is no comparison. Lastly note, that it is said, that *Tamar bare Pharez unto Judah. Mothers bring forth children to the fathers of the children*: so is it said that *Leah bare sonnes to Jacob* <Gen. 29.34>: for the father is to beare the name, and take the child into his care and tuition, whether borne in wedlocke or otherwise. Let fathers therefore take care of such as they beget: for to them hath the mothers brought them out.

*Of the seed which the Lord shall give thee of this young woman.*] Hence may bee observed, that *an old man may marry a young woman*: as heere *Boaz* did *Ruth*, and *Joseph* did the *Virgin Mary*: but not for wantonnesse, but for issue and posterity, as *Boaz* doth: allow therefore of such marriages in such a case: but beware of an old man lecherous, who is one that God hateth; so an old woman wantonly affected, to

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<sup>246</sup> See 1 Kings 14.7.

<sup>247</sup> Bernard is reacting to the increasing social mobility of his time.

marry with a young man. Secondly, that *Children are Gods gift* <Gen. 48.9>: of which at large before.<sup>248</sup> Which must moove us to thank God for them, and to traine them up to his service, and to acknowledge them his gracious [p. 434] gift, as *Jacob* did <Gen. 33.5>. Thirdly, that *true prayer is not without faith*: for it proceedeth from it, as the Apostle teacheth <Rom. 10.14>; and heere the words plainly imply, that these Elders and people were perswaded, that God would give to *Boaz* children of *Ruth*: for they said, *Which the Lord shall give thee;*] As taking it for granted, that he would give him children; which they were perswaded unto from the young yeeres of *Ruth*, then from the obedience of *Boaz*, who married *Ruth* onely to raise up children to the dead, that his name might not perish, according to the Law of God, which hee herein chiefly respected <Deut. 25<sup>249</sup>>: and thirdly, because this was the Line and Stocke, out of which the Messias should come, according to *Jacobs* prophesie,<sup>250</sup> and therefore they knew that of these should come issue to fulfill the prophesie. In praying, let us also with these beleeeve, so are wee commanded <Jas. 1.6>; and if we doe beleeeve, we shall obtaine what wee aske <Matt. 21.22>, if the Lord thinke it needfull for us: for the prayer of faith availeth much, if it be fervent <Jas. 5.15-17>. Fourthly and lastly, hence observe, that *Prayer is a meanes to make an honourable house, and to continue it in the following posterity*. Therefore *David* used prayer in this case <2 Sam. 7.25>, as these doe here for *Boaz* house in his posterity; and so did *Abraham* pray for *Ishmael* to continue in the Lords sight, who promised him mercy, and an honourable issue to many generations from him <Gen. 17.20>. Let us use this meanes to uphold and continue our house: I have spoken of many good meanes

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<sup>248</sup> See pp. 418-19, 420, 421, 422, 428.

<sup>249</sup> Specifically, verse 6.

<sup>250</sup> See Gen. 49.10.



before <Out of verse 5<sup>251</sup>>, let this bee added to them. But men in [p. 435] their worldly wisdom seeke by other meanes without prayer, to continue their posterity in honour, as by these: First, by great purchases for their children. But doth not *Salomon* tell them, that riches are not for ever <Prov. 27.24>? And we find it true by experience. Secondly, by building stately houses, and calling them by their owne names, thinking that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations. But doth not the Psalmist tell them that this their way is their folly <Ps. 49.13<sup>252</sup>>? Is not the Tower of Babel throwne downe? And, became not that their confusion, by which they sought a name and to continue together <Gen. 11.4, 8>? Thirdly, by intailing<sup>253</sup> of lands upon the heires male, from one to another for many generations. But could there be a surer intaile than the Kingdome of Israel to *David*, which yet was almost quite cut off by *Salomons* idolatrie, so as *Rehoboam* lost ten Tribes in his dayes? Intaile it as sure as they can, yet the iniquity of the children will make it to bee cut off. God liketh not, that men should by their devices tie his blessings to whom they list, for vaine-glory sake, and to keepe up a name. And doe not we see Lawyers, which teach parents to intaile, how they can teach their children to untaile it againe? Fourthly, by matching with great houses, and by this they thinke their house shall stand. But did not *Ahab* by marrying with *Jezabel*, the King of Zidons daughter, root out his whole posterity? And did not *Jehosaphat* by marrying his sonne to *Ahabs* daughter, doe almost the like? Fifthly and [p. 436] lastly, by procuring great places of honour in the Common-wealth: oh then they

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<sup>251</sup> See pp. 375-7.

<sup>252</sup> Verses 11 and 12 are also relevant.

<sup>253</sup> 'entail': 'To convert (an estate) into a 'fee tail' (*feudum talliatum*); to settle (land, an estate, etc.) on a number of persons in succession, so that it cannot be bequeathed at pleasure by any one possessor.' 'fee tail': 'An estate of inheritance entailed or limited to some particular class of heirs of the person to whom it is granted; a limited fee.' (OEDO).

thinke they are surely founded! But doth not *Salomon* tell them, that the Crowne endureth not to every generation <Prov. 27.24>? but let these consider of *Haman*, and of his high place, and yet how suddainly hee came to a fearefull end; and with this let them not forget the Treasurer *Shebna*, who graved, as it were, his habitation in a Rocke by policie, and by making strong sides for himselfe. But doth not *Esay* say, That the Lord would lead him into captivity, and violently turne him, and tosse him as a Ball, and drive him from his station, and bestow his place upon another <Isa. 22.16-17, 21<sup>254</sup>>? And therefore without the Lord all these meanes are weake to uphold a house; yea, such a house, sinne will under-myne and cause to fall. Let none therefore rest on these weake props, but pray unto the Lord for his blessing, which maketh strong the habitation of the righteous.

Verse 13. *So Boaz tooke Ruth, and shee was his wife: And when hee went in unto her, the Lord gave her conception, and shee bare a sonne.*

Here is the full accomplishment of the marriage, the holy liberty thereof, and the blessing of God upon the same: both for conception, and bringing forth a sonne.

*So Boaz tooke Ruth.*] Where hee tooke her, it is not mentioned; whether after this Assembly was dismissed or before, is not certaine: some [p. 437] thinke shee stayed with *Naomi*, expecting the successe, as *Naomi* advised in Chapter 3 verse 18,

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<sup>254</sup> Verses 15-21 are relevant. Verses 20-21 state that Eliakim the son of Hilkiah will displace Shebna, taking his authority. Shebna's later downfall is indicated in other biblical passages. Isa. 36.1 relates that Sennacherib king of Assyria took the defenced cities in Judah in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah. Hezekiah reigned from 715 until 686 B.C. Isa. 36.3 states that Eliakim, Hilkiah's son, was over the house and that Shebna was the scribe. Thus, it would appear that by this time, Eliakim had displaced Shebna. There is a suggestion of how this happened in the account of the same events in 2 Kings 18. According to verses 14-16, Hezekiah gave the king of Assyria tribute, handing over all the silver in the house of the Lord and in the treasures of the king's house. It would appear that Shebna, originally treasurer, lost status when Hezekiah had to submit to the Assyrians.

and so from thence did take her. It may bee shee was, while this Assembly was together (after *Boaz* had publikely declared his mind, and bought the land and her at the hands of the Kinsman) brought in thither, and so he there did solemnly take her: for in the end of the former verse it is said, *Of the seed which the Lord shall give thee of this yong woman,*] as implying her then there present. And *He tooke her,*] implyeth the marriage, as appeareth elsewhere in other places <Gen. 24.67; 1 Sam. 25.43; Judg. 14.8>. And the next words in the Text shew, that it was not like *Sichems* taking of *Dinah*, to deflowre her <Gen. 34.2>, but to make her his wife by lawfull wedlocke, which was ever publike, and not done privately in corners. So then the meaning of the words is, that *Boaz* did marry *Ruth*, and so was his wife; and with us such as doe marry, doe take either other by the hand, and doe by word of mouth say, that the one doth take the other to live together as man and wife. And it may be, that the word *taking* is put for *marrying*, to note the free consent of mind and heart; then the right and interest which the one hath in the other: and thirdly, the care and protection of the husband, which he taketh of his wife, and the womans acknowledgement to have betaken her selfe unto the man, as her head and husband. This *Boaz* taking and marrying of *Ruth*, sheweth, how *a noble man* (for his father was the Prince of Judah <1 Chron. 2.10<sup>255</sup>>) *may marry with a meane poore woman, so shee be vertuous*: as his [p. 438] father did *Rahab* before, and *Assuerus* did *Ester*, and *no disparagement*: though *Boaz* had further reason to lead him thereto, as his owne words before declare <Verse 10>. Againe, we see, how an Israelite might marry with a woman a stranger, so shee were a Convert. And lastly, that a good man will keepe his honest word: for what he had privately promised <Chapter 3.11, 13>,

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<sup>255</sup> Verse 11 is also relevant. In this biblical passage, only Nahshon, Salmon's father and Boaz's grandfather, is described as the prince. Bernard describes both Nahshon and Salmon as princes on p. 472. The instance of Salmon derives from Lavater (160v; the page number is misprinted as 159).

he heere now maketh good to the utmost: of which two last points I have spoken before.<sup>256</sup>

*And shee was his wife.*] That is, by his taking and marrying of her. So we see, that *lawfull marriage is that which maketh man and woman husband and wife*. So is it said of *Rebecca*, *That Isaac tooke her*, and shee was his wife <Gen. 24.67>; and in like case of the woman of *Timnah*, which *Samson* did marry <Judg. 14.8, 15>. It is not living or lying together, as lewd persons may doe, nor yet mutuall affection, but the entering in Gods holy Ordinance, which maketh the woman the wife. Therefore to live honestly, and to make a woman thy wife, marry her lawfully. Now in this that the marriage is so shortly described, without mentioning of any such feasting and merriments, as is often with us, with too much ryot and excesse; it may here bee demanded, *Whether it bee lawfull to make feasts at marriages, and then to bee merry?* *Answer*. It is lawfull to be merry in sobriety, to rejoyce and sing, so it be with grace in our hearts, as the Apostle speaketh <Eph. 5.19>. And we may make feasts, as *Laban* did at *Jacobs* marriage <Gen. 29.22>, and as *Samson* did at his, as the custome was among the Philistims, which [p. 439] he observed <Judg. 14.10>: yea, our Saviour was at a feast when some were married, and did by divine power supply their want of wine <John 2<sup>257</sup>>; and by the Parable it seemeth to be an usuall thing to feast, and to have solemnities observed besides at marriages <Matt. 22.2 and 25<sup>258</sup>>. Here onely beware of wantonnesse, ryot, and excesse, and then may they eate, and drinke, and rejoyce their hearts.

*And when hee went in unto her.*] This is expounded in another place, to goe to her into the chamber <Judg. 15.1>: for Brides had a private chamber <Joel 2.16>,

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<sup>256</sup> See pp. 28, 401; 294, 311-12, 329, 334-5.

<sup>257</sup> Specifically, verses 1-10.

<sup>258</sup> Specifically, verses 1-12.

into which the bridegrome entred on the marriage day: but here is modestly implied the act of marriage, set out also in Scripture by other tearmes, as of knowing, lying with one, giving due benevolence; never speaking hereof, but by a periphrasis and circumlocution: and therefore are wee hereby taught, that *when necessity enforceth to speake of that, which in proper speech is not comely to utter, it is to be expressed so, as chaste eares may not be offended*. This the holy Ghost in thus setting downe this thing in these modest tearmes teacheth; And it serveth to reprove such as abuse their tongues to wantonnesse, and lascivious and immodest tearmes, to make others merry, and to be held pleasant companions: but such fooles, as *Salomon* calleth them, make a sport of sin.<sup>259</sup> for these offend against the Commandement and charge given by the Apostle <Eph. 4.29; Col. 3.8; Eph. 5.3<sup>260</sup>>: they corrupt good manners, by their ill words <1 Cor. 15.33>; they trespasse against the seventh Commandement,<sup>261</sup> and do contrary to that which the Apostle teacheth and exhorteth [p. 440] unto for the government of the tongue both in speaking and singing <Col. 4.8;<sup>262</sup> Eph. 4.29 and 5.19>; yea, these doe grieve, not as they think, onely men, such as they judge over-precise, because they will not runne with them into the like excesse of ryot, but the blessed Spirit of God <Eph. 4.30>. And let these know, that if men must give an account unto God for every idle word, then surely for such filthy communication and bawdy songs, which fleshly spirits made themselves merry withall, which godly men have condemned, calling such a speech, The chariot of adultery, because it bringeth many to such a lewd practice. Heathen by lawes have forbidden it, for that it polluteth the mind, filleth it with wickednesse, and maketh such impudent <*Athenian*

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<sup>259</sup> See Prov. 14.9.

<sup>260</sup> Verse 4 is also relevant.

<sup>261</sup> 'Thou shalt not commit adultery.' (Exod. 20.14)

<sup>262</sup> The correct reference is Col. 4.6.

*law: apud Stobaeum.*<sup>263</sup>>; and also did punish the same, as is reported of the Romanes, that so the dignity of the Lawes and Discipline among them might remaine, as one saith, inviolable <*Aulus Gellius*<sup>264</sup>>. What a shame and impudencie is it then in such as would bee called Christians, and yet cannot by Reason nor Religion of Christ, be restrained from such petulancie and wantonnesse? Note againe here, how this is spoken after marriage, and not before; to teach, that *such as be married, may lawfully company together* <Gen. 29.21>: and that by warrant from God, who said after hee had made man, and joyned *Adam* and *Eve* in marriage, *Increase and multiply*: and the Apostle teacheth, that then neither of them hath power over their owne body, and hereof maketh a double use, to render due benevolence, and not to defraud one another <1 Cor. 7.3, 5>. Then they are to be repro- [p. 441] ved, which before marriage company one with another, as incontinent and violently lustfull persons doe, and such as being married doe defraud one another. And heere this condemneth the Church of Rome, which alloweth man and wife, upon the vowe of chastitie (forsooth) to live asunder one from another, contrary to the Apostles Doctrine and exhortation <1 Cor. 7.5>.

*The Lord gave her conception.*] Hence it is evident, that *the gift of conception is from the Lord*: and this is true not onely in such as be altogether barren, as was *Sarah, Rebecca, Hannah*, the Shunamite, and *Elizabeth*: but in such as bee at the first fruitfull; this also is from his gift <Job 10.8, 10-11>. And therefore is it to be

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<sup>263</sup> Bernard evidently derives the reference to 'Athenian law' from Lavater, who mentions that Stobaeus quotes Charondas Cataneus on forbidding lewd speech (Lavater 144v). Johannes Stobaeus, who lived in the fifth century A.D., prepared an anthology of Greek authors. The passage referred to is almost certainly in Stobaeus 4.2.24. 'Let no one use shameful language, lest it lead the will astray to shameful deeds or infect the soul with shamelessness' etc. See Holger Thesleff ed., Pythagorean Texts of the Hellenistic Period (1965) 62. There is no reference here to the laws of Athens.

<sup>264</sup> The reference is to Aulus Gellius, Attic Nights, 4.20, vol. 1 pp. 372-5. A Roman censor punished a citizen who had made a joking response to a formal question by reducing him to the rank of commoner.

ascribed to him, he is to be thanked for it; wee are not to thinke, as *Rachel* did, that a husband can give children.<sup>265</sup> it is no strength of body, nor good complection that can make fruitfull, but the blessing of God. And wee may further learne here, that *the Lord alloweth of the honest act of marriage*: for hee commandeth due benevolence <1 Cor. 7<sup>266</sup>>: he calleth the marriage bed undefyled <Heb. 13.4>, hee blesseth it, and giveth the gift of conception: hee allowed thereof before the fall <Gen. 1<sup>267</sup>>, and hath in mercy ordained it as a remedy against sinne <1 Cor. 7.2>. This therefore confuteth such as have judged the companying together of man and wife to bee a sinnefull act, absurdly and prophanely abusing this place for it, *Those that live in the flesh, cannot please God*.<sup>268</sup> as if that which God himselfe hath allowed, and most holy men of God have done, should bee now that, which [p. 442] should debarre them of Gods favour: when yet these popish harlotries can dispence with Gods Law, and keepe their whores; and yet not live in the flesh, but bee holy men. But let them know, that whoremongers and adulterers God will judge <Heb. 13<sup>269</sup>>: when marriage is honourable, and the bed undefiled, and the libertie to be used and allowed for procreation of children, to avoid fornication, with heartie thanks unto God for his ordinance. Heere note farther the difference which the Scripture maketh betweene conception of a woman a wife, and of another. In copulation out of marriage, it is said of a woman, that *shee conceived*, as *Thamar* by *Judah*, *Hagar* by *Abraham*, and *Bathsheba* by *David* <Gen. 38.18 and 16.4; 2 Sam. 11.5>: but never as heere, that *the Lord gave her to conceive*: for the other is by his common blessing, as among bruit beasts, but this by his favourable approbation and gracious blessing, as

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<sup>265</sup> See Gen. 30.1-2.

<sup>266</sup> Specifically, verse 3.

<sup>267</sup> Specifically, verse 28.

<sup>268</sup> See Rom. 8.8. St. Paul is contrasting the flesh and the spirit.

<sup>269</sup> Specifically, verse 4.

*Jacob* said of his children unto *Esau* <Gen. 33.5>.

*And she bare a sonne.*] After the gift of conception, followeth child-birth, not forthwith, but in due time of life <Gen. 18.10>, which is sometime at the nyenth moneth, but commonly at the tenth. It was not enough that she should conceive, and after have an abortive birth, but that God in mercy should preserve the child alive in the mothers wombe to be timely borne: for as not to conceive, but to be barren, was a punishment, so conceiving, and to bring forth an untimely birth, is in the same nature. The Lord therefore here sheweth his goodnesse, not onely in giving conception, but a [p. 443] happy deliverance unto *Ruth*, and a timely birth; so the Lord followeth his with his mercies. Now in that it is said to be a sonne, and not a daughter, it is to note the greater blessing. For *it is a greater blessing to have a sonne, then a daughter*. And therefore wee doe finde, when God would make the barren to beare, and such as had begged that blessing at his hands, he gave them sonnes, as we may see in *Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Hannah, Elizabeth* and in others. Because the sonne is the upholder of the name of the family, he is in nature the more worthy; for the woman was made for man, and not man for the woman, as the Apostle teacheth;<sup>270</sup> and the man is a more fitter instrument for the good of the Church or Commonweale, albeit sometime the Lord hath done wonderously by women. Besides these reasons, the males among the Israelites were a greater blessing; for that the man-child, and the continuance of the line in *Judah*, gave them hope of the Messias, which they looked for; and the male child bare upon him the seale of the covenant of God, which was circumcision, that God would bee their God, and of their seed after them. Therefore praise God for this blessing and birth,

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<sup>270</sup> See 1 Cor. 11.8-9. St. Paul refers to woman's being made from Adam's rib (Gen. 2.21-2) when God said he would make a help for him (Gen. 2.18).



for both, but more specially for this, as beholding therein the Lords mercy to keepe thy name upon the earth, among thy brethren, and Saints of God. Lastly, note the effectuall power of the prayer which they made, verse 11. The Lord heard them; for here wee see *Ruth* before barren, is now become fruitfull. So as we hereby doe learne, That [p. 444] *the hearty and faithfull prayer of the godly is never in vaine*: for the people and Elders desired that *Ruth* should be fruitfull, and she was so, and also that *Boaz* posterity might be honorable and renowned, and so it was, as we may see in the 21 and 22 verses of this chapter. For an effectuall praier of righteous men availeth much, as *James* saith, and prooveth by an instance of the prayer of *Elijah* <Jas. 5.16-17<sup>271</sup>>, and as may be seene in the prayer of *Moses*,<sup>272</sup> of *Asa*, *Jehosaphat*, *Esai*, and *Hezekiah* <2 Chron. 14.11-12 and 20.6, 14-15 and 32.20<sup>273</sup>>, and of many moe: which is to encourage us to the exercise of prayer in faith and fervency of spirit. If any thinke, that those afore-named were extraordinary men, and that therefore wee poore and miserable persons, in comparison of them, cannot looke to have our prayers so effectuall with God; I answer, first, that *James* takes away this objection and feare of acceptance with God; for hee saith, that *Elijah* was a man subject to the like passions as wee are, yet hee prayed and was heard. Secondly, that we have assistance of God his Spirit, teaching us to pray with groanes which cannot bee expressed,<sup>274</sup> because wee know not how to pray as wee ought: and thirdly, that Christ prayeth for us, and in him we offer up our supplications, and so shall be heard. This lesson also teacheth us to esteeme greatly of the prayers of the godly, seeing they be so effectuall, and desire them to pray for us, as the Israelites did *Samuel* <1

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<sup>271</sup> Verse 18 is also relevant.

<sup>272</sup> See Exod. 32.11-14.

<sup>273</sup> Verse 21 is also relevant.

<sup>274</sup> See Rom. 8.26.

Sam. 12<sup>275</sup>>, and S. *Paul* the faithfull and Saints of God, as may appeare in almost every of his Epistles; so highly did he account of their prayers for him <Rom. 15.30; 2 Cor. 1.11; Eph. 6.18;<sup>276</sup> Col. 4.3; 1 Thess. 5.25; Philem. Verse 22; Phil. 1.19; Heb. 13.18-19>.

[p. 445] Verse 14. *And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the Lord, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may bee famous in Israel.*

Praise and thanksgiving unto God at the birth of the child. The parties rejoycing were the women, their joy was uttered to *Naomi*, the manner was holy and religious praising God; the matter thereof, or the mooving cause was, that God had not left her without a kinsman, and the hopefull end thereof, that his name may be famous in Israel.

*And the women said.*] That is, such godly women as were at the child-birth, these rejoyced in *Naomies* behalfe. For *it is the duty of one to rejoyce in the welfare of another, when God bestoweth his blessings upon them.* As these doe here, the neighbours of *Elizabeth*, *Jethro* at the prosperity of Israel, and the friends of *Job* at his recovery <Luke 1.58; Exod. 18.9; Job 42.11>: This we are commanded to doe, to rejoyce with those that doe rejoyce <Rom. 12.15>: the godly are members one of another, and therefore must needs have a fellow feeling <1 Cor. 12.26>: it is a fruit of love and charity, and that wee love our neighbours as our selves <Matt. 22.39>, which if we doe, we will rejoyce in their welfare, as we doe in our owne. But let this be with them in lawfull things; for charity rejoyceth not in iniquity <1 Cor. 13<sup>277</sup>>:

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<sup>275</sup> Specifically, verse 19.

<sup>276</sup> Verse 19 is also relevant.

<sup>277</sup> Specifically, verse 6.

let us rejoyce with them in their happy and blessed welfare, whether temporall as former examples shew, or spirituall, as Saint *Paul* rejoyced in the [p. 446] behalfe of the Philippians and Colossians, and Saint *John* in the graces of the elect Lady and her children <Phil. 1.3-4; Col. 1.3, 12; 2 John Verse 4>. This reproveth three sorts, first, such as envy the prosperity of others, as *Sanballats* and *Tobies* <Neh. 2.10>, like Egyptians <Exod. 1<sup>278</sup>>, which cannot endure to see others prosper by them. These are voyd of charity which is without envy <1 Cor. 13.4>: and they are like the divell, that being cast from Heaven, could not endure to see man in Paradise; or like divelish men, *Cain*, *Saul*, and the Scribes and Pharises, the enemies of Christ. Secondly, such as rejoyce with their friends in their prosperity, though they get up by unjust meanes, and by unlawfull practices uphold themselves: this is not true love; for here is more cause of mourning then of rejoycing <1 Cor. 13.6>; for what joy can it bee to a godly heart, to see his friend rich and in glory, by usury, bribery, oppression, deceit and fraud, which came for plagues upon him from Heaven, and are the high way to hell and damnation? But outward prosperity so dazeleth the eyes, and deludeth the heart, as the plagues of the soule, and vengeance due for the same, they either see not, or beleeve not; therefore they rejoyce like worldlings with such as themselves. The third sort are they, which cannot rejoyce with others in their spirituall welfare, that men are become godly, as Saint *Paul* and *John* did, but rather despise them for it, because they themselves savour not of the things of God, they love darkenesse rather then the light. If they doe rejoyce herein, it is rather for the good, which conversion brings [p. 447] in worldly respects, then of religion it selfe, as that hereby they leave to be unthriftie, and doe care to live in the world, and such

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<sup>278</sup> Specifically, verses 8-14.

like, which is no rejoycing at their heavenly graces, but for worldly profit, and for such things as Religion maketh good in regard of the outward things of this life; as profit, good report in a common acception, civill carriage, and so forth. This is a worldly, and not a spirituall rejoycing with those that truely rejoyce in the Spirit.

*Unto Naomi.*] And why to her more then to *Ruth*? Because she was the principall instrument for the effecting of the marriage, and shee stood in most need of comfort, having endured a long time affliction. For *those chiefly are to be cheared with the consideration of Gods mercies and blessings, who have been most humbled*: As these doe here *Naomi*; for they speake so to her, as if this blessing had been onely for her comfort, saying, He hath not left *thee* without a kinsman, hee shall be to *thee* a restorer of life, and so forth. And therefore when wee see any to have been much cast downe, and that the Lord beginneth to shew them mercy; let us speake thereof chearefully unto them, and comfort their hearts; for they know how to use well Gods mercies, their former humiliation hath prepared them, hath schooled them, so as they will not waxe proud with the Lords blessings, as others doe.

*Blessed bee the Lord.*] Words of praise and thankesgiving to the Author of this blessing. Thus begin they their joy and mirth: for *the joy* [p. 448] *of the godly is holy and religious*: for the matter of their joy is good and lawfull, the manner with grace in the heart, as the Apostle exhorteth <Eph. 5.19>, and the end, to set forth the Lords glory, of whom with praises they make mention. This was the joy of *Moses* and the Israelites <Exod. 15<sup>279</sup>>, of *Deborah* and *Barak* <Judg. 5<sup>280</sup>>, of *Jehosaphat* and *Judah* <2 Chron. 20<sup>281</sup>>, of *Zacharie* and *Elizabeth* <Luke 1<sup>282</sup>>: for the godly take

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<sup>279</sup> Specifically, verses 1-21.

<sup>280</sup> The whole chapter is relevant.

<sup>281</sup> Specifically, verses 19, 21-2, 28.

<sup>282</sup> Specifically, verses 42-5 and 68-79.

occasion from all the good which befalleth them, to be mindfull of the Lord, from whom they know they receive all blessings whatsoever they be, and whosoever be the instruments thereof to them: with *David* therefore they say, O my soule, praise thou the Lord, and forget not all his benefits <Ps. 103<sup>283</sup>>! If this bee the joy of the godly, what wickednesse then is it in those, who in their mirth, and in the midst of Gods blessings doe put away the remembrance of God, and the thought of his precepts: spirituall songs, and gracious speeches marre utterly their mirth; the presence of the godly is hatefull to them, and hindereth their merriments; for they cannot rejoyce, but in vanitie; their talke is ribauldry, their songs wantonnesse, their laughter madnesse, and the delight of their hearts meere sensuality; the mirth of these must turne into mourning before they dye, else shall their musicke bee else-where weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth: And here, before I end this, women may learne how to behave themselves at the birth of Children, as first in prayer, then in praises; pray they should for pardon of sinne, and bewaile, in the womans pangs, original cor- [p. 449] ruption; in the birth, our spirituall pollution; and praise God they ought for safe deliverance, acknowledging it his mercy and goodnesse, as these doe here. Many things might moove them hereto, and to be far from the behaviour of some, who in stead of praising God, sit downe to bee merry, and to spend their speeches idly, prating of others, yea, sometimes in lewd slandering of their Neighbours, or in filthy scurrility, wherein the Midwife, which should bee a mother of modesty, is often chiefe; when such should be chaste, grave and godly matrons, who by their office and godly counsell might doe much good, if they were as they ought to bee; but so lewde are some of them, as they cannot endure the company of

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<sup>283</sup> Specifically, verse 2.

better disposed persons: Their praises should bee like the Midwives in Egypt, women fearing God <Exod. 1<sup>284</sup>>, able to instruct, to comfort, to pray unto God, and to praise him for his goodnesse.

*Which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman.*] This is it they blesse God for; that God had given to *Naomi* a young kinseman; a kinsman indeed, which will so shew himselfe. *Naomi* had a kinsman very nigh unto her before, Chapter 3.12, but hee shewed himselfe not like a kinsman, and therefore was here passed over as no kinsman. For *as men in deede shew themselves, such they bee, and so are to bee esteemed*, otherwise they have but a name of a Brother, Father, Kinsman, Friend, Christian, yea, Minister, Magistrate, and have not the trueth and substance of such. They [p. 450] be but meerey titular, and glory in shadowes, as most doe, who are nothing answerable to that title and name of nature, of love, of fellowship, or of office and place, which they are called by, or settled in. Note further, that *it is of God, that the godly poore are not left comfortles of some friend, one or other, both able and willing to helpe them*. Thus the women here tell *Naomi*, and doe blesse God therefore in her behalfe; for if God should not raise them up succour, who would respect them? Because poverty causeth contempt, or neglect at the least, and the religion of the poore is but held counterfeit, and themselves hypocrites: so the world judgeth of them. And therefore when God raiseth up friends to take knowledge of them, and to doe them good, great cause have they to blesse God, as they here doe, both for hope of supply of wants, and also preventing of injuries, which honest poore by such able and good friends are lesse subject unto, then others which want them.

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<sup>284</sup> Specifically, verses 15-21.

*That his name may be famous in Israel.*] This is the hope they have of this young *Obed*; and one mercy of God, in giving this Sonne unto this honorable family, is, that he might be renowned among Gods people. Whence note these two lessons: first, *That much is expected and looked for from the children of great and godly Parents*, both in respect of the Parents, and also of the Children. For is it supposed, that Parents being godly, will have care to instruct, and if need be, to correct their Children, to pray for them, and bee good ex- [p. 451] amples to them, and being great, that they will use the best meanes, and procure the best helps for their good education, and leave them sufficient to shew forth the fruits of godlinesse. And if thus Parents doe, who may imagine otherwise, till the contrary appeare, but that the Children of such will demeane themselves as they should? And who can expect but good from Children of godly Parents? Should not the Fathers graces provoke Children to goodnesse? and their greatnesse, to abhorre base practices? Good Children will not degenerate from good Parents; whose goodnesse will more perswade to well-doing, then greatnesse to make them proud and wicked, as some *Absaloms* and *Esaus* have beene, and yet are, to the griefe of religious Parents, and at length to the shame and confusion of themselves. Secondly, here may be observed, that *God giveth Children to the better sort, great and honorable, that they may become famous amongst Gods people*. So conceived these godly women of this Sonne of *Boaz*; for, indeed, all the blessings of riches and honor given unto Parents, are not only given for their owne good, but amongst other ends, for the better inabling of them to bring up their family in good order, and especially their Children in the waies of God, for his service and honour, as they have more meanes to provoke them thereto. Let therefore such Parents here take such a course with their

Children, as they may make them, by Gods blessing, famous in Israel, in Gods Church, and among his people; [p. 452] which they may effect by these good meanes. First, by being every way, and at all times a good example of piety to them, as *David* was <Ps. 101<sup>285</sup>>, and *Zacharie* <Luke 1<sup>286</sup>>. Secondly, by instructing them carefully in godlinesse and Religion, as Parents are commanded <Eph. 4.4<sup>287</sup>>, and as *David* did instruct *Salomon* <Prov. 4<sup>288</sup>>. Thirdly, by seeing them set to the practice of that which they are taught, and to have an especiall eye thereto. Men teach their Children good manners among men, for civill carriage of their outward man, and will see therein if they offend, and reprove them; so should they thus see to them in their Christian good manners and behaviour towards God and good men, and in every Christian duty towards all. Fourthly, by setting them in some particular calling, as *Adam* the Monarch of the world did his sonnes; to keepe them from idlenesse, from being busie-bodies, and from a world of wickednesse, which such as live but of a calling runne into. Fifthly, by restraining them from ill company, idle, wanton, prodigall and prophane persons, and exhorting them to have fellowship with such as feare God, also with civill and honest men well reported of, well brought up, and well disposed unto goodnesse. Sixthly, by commending, countenancing, and encouraging their well doing, both by present rewards and promises of future good: but if they doe ill, then fatherly to admonish at the first, to with-hold them from evill by love, rather then by slavish feare; but if this will not prevaile, then to rebuke sharply, and to punish [p. 453] as the cause shall require. Thus if Parents would doe, there is no doubt, but by Gods mercy, many mens children of place, may

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<sup>285</sup> Specifically, verse 2.

<sup>286</sup> Specifically, verse 6.

<sup>287</sup> The correct reference is Eph. 6.4.

<sup>288</sup> The whole chapter is relevant.



become famous in Israel, and not be so infamous, as some be to Parents shame, and their owne overthrow.

Verse 15. *And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter in law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee then seven sonnes, hath borne him.*

This is still the continued speech of the women to *Naomi*; the scope whereof is still to comfort her, in foreshewing what this Babe should be unto her, and the reason why they so speake of him.

*And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life.*] *Naomi* had many crosses, she had lost her Husband and Children, yea, and her outward state in the world, which made her, as it were, dead with sorrow, which these Women and godly Neighbours well considered of, and here therefore doe enlarge their speech for *Naomies* greater comfort; to teach us, *That true friends, affected with others miseries, cannot but meditate many arguments of comfort in the daies of their felicity.* For the joy of their hearts is unfained for their friends prosperity, as truely as before they were mooved with their calamitie. Thus let us learne to trie the sympathy of mens hearts towards other in prosperitie and adversitie.

*A restorer of thy life.*] So they speake, as if by [p. 454] her former misery she had, as it were, been livelesse. Whence note; *That heavy crosses, as povertie, old age, Widdowhood, and losse of Children, doe bedead<sup>289</sup> the spirit, even of godly persons.* So these words imply, and experience teacheth. For no affliction is joyous

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<sup>289</sup> ‘bedead’: ‘To deaden. Only found in pples. **be deaded**, deadened; **be deadening**, deadening.’ (OEDO). OEDO claim that the word is only found in participles, so Bernard’s use has evidently not been noted by lexicographers.

for the present, but grievous, Heb. 12.12. How much more when many come together? Therefore let us have compassion of the afflicted, and labour to raise up their spirits, especially of poore afflicted Widdowes; for it is a part of pure and undefiled religion before God, Jas. 1.27. This condemneth such of cruelty, as will vex the afflicted; or bee miserable comforters, as *Jobs* friends were to him. Secondly, wee may learne, *That godly Children are as restorers of life to their Parents*, Prov. 10.1, they make them glad. Let Children labour to be such, that they may cheere up their Parents hearts; and not bee as too many be, causers of hearts grieffe to them, making them to goe downe with mourning to the grave; for such are foolish Children, Prov. 15.20 and 10.1 and 17.25.

*And a nourisher of thine old age.*] Note, first, *that old age needs nourishing*: for it maketh man feeble, and to want heate, 1 Kings 1.1; Eccles. 12.3. Also to be subject to diseases, as to bee blind, as was *Isaac*, Gen. 27,<sup>290</sup> and *Jacob*, Gen. 48.10, and to be lame, as *Asa*, 1 Kings 15.<sup>291</sup> Therefore in the youth of Summer, provide somewhat for the Winter of old age: and when thou hast provision for age, thanke God therefore. Secondly, *that children are to be nourishers of their parents in their old age*: as [p. 455] *Joseph* was to *Jacob*, Gen. 45.11, and *Ruth* but a daughter in law here, to *Naomi*, Chapter 3.18 <See before Chapter 2.18<sup>292</sup>>, and such a one the women hoped *Obed* would be. Let children learne this duety: for first, nature teacheth it, in the Storke;<sup>293</sup> and branches of trees receiving the sap from the roote, doe returne it againe to it towards Winter. Secondly, Reason teacheth to bee thankefull, and to doe good to them that have done us good. From parents children

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<sup>290</sup> Specifically, verse 1.

<sup>291</sup> Specifically, verse 23.

<sup>292</sup> The marginall reference seems to be a correction of the incorrect reference in the text.

<sup>293</sup> The example of the stork evidently derives from Lavater, who observes that storks show kindness to their dams when they are old (Lavater 150v).

have being, bringing up, and their preservation; whose *love, care, paines* and *cost*, children can never recompence. Thirdly, it is one end why they bee borne: for if a friend bee borne to helpe his friend in adversitie, Prov. 17.17, then much more children to helpe their parents, who are bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh. Fourthly, parents are childrens glory, Prov. 17.6. Therfore should they make much of them. Fifthly, hereto adde the Commandement, Exod. 20,<sup>294</sup> to honour our parents. Now, how are they honoured, when in want they are not relieved? Sixtly, such as succour their parents, may expect a blessing from their children. Those children therefore which are without naturall affection, sinne against God, against Nature, Reason and Religion. But children will, perhaps, say, Our parents are froward and hard to please, and therefore they make us wearie and unwilling to keepe and nourish them. *Answer.* First, consider how froward you were in childhood, and yet poore parents carefully kept you, and cast you not off. Secondly, when old age commeth, you may bee [p. 456] such. Do then, as you would be done unto: learne to beare with your parents, to teach your children how to beare with you. Thirdly, note how children can beare with rich parents well enough, while they hope for profit, and feare to lose what they looke for. If hope of gaine can make children put on such patience, then let true love doe it much more.

*For thy daughter in law, which loveth thee, which is better then seven sonnes, hath borne him.]* This is a reason of the womens hope of this childs kindnesse towards *Naomi*. From these words we may learne these things: First, *That there is good hope of childrens love, which come of loving parents, that they will love such as their parents have loved.* Thus the women conclude: and this was a lesson which

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<sup>294</sup> Specifically, verse 12.

*David* taught his sonne *Salomon*, 1 Kings 2.7. And Christ loving those whom his Father loveth, teacheth so much. Let therefore children be thus affected, especially if their parents have set their love aright, upon such as were worthy of love. Secondly, *That there may be great love betweene a mother in law, and a daughter in law.* *Ruths* love towards *Naomi* was very great, shee left her countrey and kindred for her, Chapter 1.16-17, laboured painefully for her, Chapter 2.18, 23, and *Naomi* was not wanting to seeke the good of *Ruth*, Chapter 3.<sup>295</sup> Let these two bee examples to such: and to make them loving, strive to bee religious, and to feare God, as these did: for Religion will worke, what corrupt nature cannot effect. Let them performe mutuall dueties. And let step- [p. 457] mothers know that they step in, to be in stead of naturall mothers, and so let children take them; so will they love one another. Thirdly, *that true love cannot be hid*: for it so will expresse it selfe, as other shall take notice of it. These women knew *Ruths* love: so did *Saul Jonathans* to *David*: the people Christs love to *Lazarus*, John 11.36, for true love will breake out as fire. Try true love by the manifestation thereof. *Joseph* may hide his a while from his brethren, and *David* from *Absalom*, but it will breake out at length <Gen. 45.1; 2 Sam. 13.39 and 14.1>. They therefore but boast vainely of love, which never expresse it. Fourthly, *that true love in adversitie, is not lost in prosperity.* *Ruth* is said still to love *Naomi*, though thus exalted: so did *Hushai David*:<sup>296</sup> so did *Jobs* friends, Chapter 2,<sup>297</sup> howsoever they erred in judgement. Let not love be altered with our estates, nor honours change good conditions, as it doth in too many. Fifthly, *that the love of a stranger may sometime exceed the love of many children by nature.*

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<sup>295</sup> Verse 1 is particularly relevant.

<sup>296</sup> Hushai was an adviser of David who was loyal to David when David had fled Jerusalem. He obeyed David's request to pretend to support Absalom's rebellion but actually defeat the policy of his adviser, Ahithophel. See 2 Sam. 15.32-7 and 16.16-23 and 17.1-23.

<sup>297</sup> Specifically, verses 11-13.

The women preferre *Ruths* love above seven sonnes, that is, above many sonnes. Such God by favour can supply, what is wanting in them by nature, and make a strangers love surpasse. Let this be comfort to the distressed.

Verse 16. *And Naomi tooke the child, and laid it in her bosome, and became nurse unto it.*

This verse sheweth the education of the child: by whom, and how.

*And Naomi tooke the child.*] This the old wo- [p. 458] man did voluntarily out of her true love both to the mother and the child. She was in the house of *Boaz* that great rich man, we here see, and so well provided for in her old age, yet would shee take paines, and not be idle. So wee see, that *the godly, though old, and well provided for, yet will set themselves to labour, and doe something*: for they make conscience of their time, not to spend their dayes in idlenesse, which they know to be a foule sinne, and the nurse of many. They will labour to be an example unto others, and to spurre the younger on to take paines. Though they live of themselves, yet they owe a duety to God, to be doing what they may; and if they live upon others, herein they shew their good will, to be as little chargeable as they may, and to be thankefull after their strength and power. Now, this holy woman is herein to bee imitated; and let none thinke that they may be excused to live idly, either for age, so long as they can take paines; or for that they have enough to live upon, because God giveth none riches to live a lazie life; but such, even old persons, should live either in labour, as Saint *Paul* willeth the widow of threescore yeeres old, or in teaching and instructing others <1 Tim. 5.4; Tit. 2.3-4>: a blessed exercise for old folke, which

will give them comfort in the end of their dayes.

*And laid it in her bosome.*] This sheweth her love, and with what tender affection shee tooke him into her hands. Foure things might move *Naomi* thus affectionatly to love the Babe: First, her love to the mother, who so exceedingly loved her. [p. 459] Secondly, her love to *Boaz* the father, who had so mercifully dealt with her. Thirdly, her love to her husband *Elimelech* departed, whose name was raised up againe by this child, upon his inheritance. Fourthly, her great hope of joy and comfort from the child it selfe, as the women foretell in the former verse. Howsoever it was, here we may see, that *Parents carry a heartie affection towards their children*: they be in their hearts and bosome: for if this love was in *Naomi* a mother in law, wee may well conclude it in naturall mothers: which may appeare many waies in their great paines and care in nursing them, and in bringing them up; in their grieffe and sorrow, when their children are any way diseased, as we may see by the teares of the father, and cry of the mother, which *Marke* and *Matthew* make mention of <Mark 9.24 and 7.25; Matt. 15.22>. In their kind imbracing of them, as here, and as did the father of the prodigall sonne. In their great joy to heare of their well-fare, as *Jacob* did rejoyce to heare of *Joseph* <Gen. 45.27-8>. In their easie natures soone reconciled to their children, when they humble themselves before them, as wee see in *David* to *Absalom*, and the father of the prodigall sonne. Lastly, in their great lamentation at the death of their children, as *David* did for *Absalom*, though a most unnaturall sonne; and the widdow which followed her sonne to the Grave, which Christ raised up to life againe.<sup>298</sup> No other reason can bee given, but that naturall and inbred love to children in parents, else some children are so hard-

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<sup>298</sup> See Luke 7.12-15.

favoured, [p. 460] and ill conditioned, as parents could not so love them, but onely for that they bee their children. Let children hence learne to bee thankfull to God and their parents, and shew love to them againe in all obedience.

*And became his Nurse.*] That is, a helpe in the mothers nursing of it, as by holding it, lulling of it asleepe, giving of it meat, warming of it, and such like helps for the nourishing of the life of the Babe, and not giving it sucke, for shee was too old to doe this. Wee may find in Scripture two sorts of Nurses: dry Nurses: such a one was *Rebeccaes* <Gen. 24.59>, to helpe to attend on the childe, and to ease the mother somewhat, as *Naomi* doth here; and in helping to nourish and bring up a child; in this sense a father is called a Nurse <Num. 11.12>. The other sort are milch-Nurses, such as give suck unto children, as in Scripture we find onely those to be their mothers, even them that bare them, to bring them up also, that as they afforded them the Wombe to beare them, so the breasts likewise to give their children sucke. And *this is the mothers duety, if possibly shee be able*:<sup>299</sup> not birth, wealth, nicety, nor idlenesse can exempt them from this duety; as it doth a number of wanton Dames, that they may be fitter to follow their lusts. *That mothers are to give their owne children sucke*: it is apparent by these reasons: the naturall instinct in beasts, teacheth every other Creature having paps, to give sucke; yea, the Sea-monsters draw out their breasts, and give sucke to their young ones, saith *Jeremie* <Lam. 4.3>: and therefore such as neglect [p. 461] this duety, are worse then these beasts; which we hold unkind, if they let not their young ones sucke. It is the principall use and end of breasts in women, when God sendeth them children, though too many now make them onely stales and bawdes of lust. The Workemanship of God should make them doe

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<sup>299</sup> For a discussion of Bernard's case for breast-feeding in the context of those of Topsell and the Countess of Lincoln (1622), see the Introduction section 6.4.

this: First, in placing them so high, as in no other creature, even neighbouring upon the heart, the Shop of heat, to convey the bloud sooner into the breasts; so as the heart workes for the Infant, to teach mothers to have affection to this worke. Secondly, so placing them, as the mother is taught in nature to embrace the Infant, to lay it to her brest, the more to worke love betweene the mother and the Babe. Thirdly, in making them to have this facultie, to turne bloud into milke. And lastly, Gods providing, as soone as the Infant is perfect for birth, milke in the brest for the Infant: so as God and Nature call them to this duety, except any will say that God hath done all this in vaine, and might have spared this Workemanship. The very name of a brest, *Mamma*, should put them in mind hereof, the first syllable whereof is that which an Infant doth soonest speake, calling the mother *Mam*; as if nature had given this first to the Babe, so easily to frame to utter this word, to put the mother in mind of her duety, and to give it her brest. Againe, God in the worke of nature hath not onely given breasts, but heads or nipples for the Infant to sucke the milke out of the breasts; and to helpe it, hath made the [p. 462] skin about the nipples more rugous and rough for the childs tongue to hold by. The Heathen Philosophers, endued but with the light of nature, teach this, and affirme, that the mothers milke implants in children the love of mothers <*Aristotle and Plutarch*<sup>300</sup>>; yea, mothers love commonly those children better, which they nurse, than the rest: and reason may bee given, because the mother giveth, and the child receiveth, by sucking her breasts, more of her substance, than they which doe not. Children love their Nurses, we see by experience, and better then their mothers that bare them, so long as they be without judgement to discerne, and onely follow nature, for the nourishment of life. It is not

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<sup>300</sup> The Plutarch reference is to 'The Education of Children', *Moralia*, vol. 1 pp. 12-15.



so naturall, say also these Heathen, to be nursed of another, as of the mother, in whom it is conceived: for differing bodies have differing temperature, and therefore the taking away of the Infant so soone from the accustomed nourishment in the mother, must needs breed an alteration. A learned man thinkes this to be the cause of the degenerating so much of Great mens sonnes, and of their so little love to their mothers <K[e]ckermannus in his *Oeconomica*<sup>301</sup>>. It is a token of no great love to children, when their mothers put them over to strangers, it is just with God, if mothers after find their children over-strange to them, being but rather halfe than whole mothers, mothers of necessitie, and not of good will: for perforce they bring forth: but it is true love which maketh a mother to give sucke: safety to themselves desireth the former, or else to dye with it in the Wombe; but love [p. 463] onely to the Infant, procureth this latter at their hands <Note this, you unnaturall mothers.>. Besides all these reasons, the examples of all the godly women in Scripture teach mothers now this duety. That right honourable *Sarah*, the wife of a most honorable man, and mightie in substance and power, nursed her sonne *Isaac* <Gen. 21.7>. Princely *Job* was nourished by the breasts of her whose wombe did beare him <Job 3.12>. *Queene Bathshebah* nursed *Salomon* <Song Sol. 8.1>. What shall I speake of holy *Hannah*, the mother also of *Moses*, of *Samsons* mother, and others <1 Sam. 2.23;<sup>302</sup> Exod. 1;<sup>303</sup> Judg. 13.42<sup>304</sup>>? The mother of Jesus our Lord and Saviour, whom all doe honour, shee did give her blessed Babe sucke: all women call her blessed, because shee bare Christ: And was shee not as blessed in giving him her

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<sup>301</sup> See Bartholomeus Keckermannus, *Synopsis Disciplinae OEconomicae* (1608) 34-5.

<sup>302</sup> The correct reference is 1 Sam. 1.23.

<sup>303</sup> The correct reference is Exod. 2.8-9.

<sup>304</sup> It is not clear what Bernard intended by this reference. Judg. 13 ends at verse 25, and there is no mention of Samson's mother's nursing him. It would seem that verse 24 is intended although it does not mention breast-feeding.

breasts to sucke <Luke 11.27>? Yes verily. Some good Ladies at this day disdain not this duty. And what should hinder them? Such persons may give sucke, and then may deliver the child over to a dry Nurse to attend it, in all other things, which helpe the poore cannot have. Lastly, as there is a blessing of the Wombe to bring forth, so of the breasts to give sucke <Gen. 49.25>: and the dry breasts and barren wombe have beene taken for a curse <Hos. 9.14>. Let mothers therefore take knowledge of these things, to presse them to this duty of nursing their owne bowels, that in giving still of their owne substance, they might the more worke love in their children towards them. Their excuses are idle, and are of no force against these reasons: for true motherly love is seene in nursing: for lust brings to conceive, necessity forceth to bring forth, but onely [p. 464] true and naturall love causeth a mother to nurse her child.

Verse 17. *And the women her Neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a sonne borne to Naomi: and they called his name Obed; he is the Father of Jesse, the Father of David.*

Here is the naming of the child, which was borne of *Ruth*: where note who named it, the reason, the name thereof, and what he came to be, shewed in his honorable and royall posterity in his Sonne and Grand-child.

*And the women her Neighbours.]* The women here are those before in verse 14, very godly and religious, as appeareth by many things before spoken off.<sup>305</sup> These godly women were *Naomi* and *Ruths* Neighbours, such as dwelt together with

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<sup>305</sup> See pp. 445, 447-9, 450, 451, 453.

them, as the word signifieth <shaken>. Here may be noted *who be fittest to be called to such businesses*, the honest Neighbours, and Kinsfolke, as was at the birth and Circumcision of *John Baptist*: for kinsfolke they expect it, and have therein an interest and cause of rejoycing in the increase of their lineage, and therefore may not be carelesly neglected: and Neighbours are to be called, as those which be nigh at hand and helpfull at need, who being neere, are better, as *Salomon* saith, then a brother farre off.<sup>306</sup> But here observe farther what manner of Neighbours they were, which these godly women had, even such as themselves: for *godly women delight to have about them such as* [p. 465] *themselves*: for the wicked and they cannot accord; they have differing heads and hearts; over the one, God ruleth; over the other, Satan; the one is regenerate in heart, the other unregenerate, and therefore cannot but jarre in word and deed, the one being an abomination to the other, as *Salomon* speaketh <Prov. 29<sup>307</sup>>. But the godly having one head, Jesus Christ, and one heart, they will reape benefit one of another <Acts 4<sup>308</sup>>; by instructing, admonishing, comforting and praying one for another. Therefore to shew your selves godly, bee yee delighted to have them about you.

*And gave it a name.*] It is said, the women gave it: we finde that sometime the Fathers gave the name,<sup>309</sup> as *Abraham* to his sonne whom hee called *Isaac*; Mothers

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<sup>306</sup> See Prov. 27.10.

<sup>307</sup> Specifically, verse 27.

<sup>308</sup> Specifically, verse 32.

<sup>309</sup> Bernard has already observed that neighbours and kinsfolk are qualified for naming children; now he notes others who performed this task. This leads him to consider further issues regarding naming – the time when it happened and, in particular, the significances of names and how people should name children meaningfully. Lavater and Topsell are also concerned with the significances of names and meaningful naming of children (*Lavater* 153v-155v; *Topsell* 80-1, 293). Bernard follows Lavater and Topsell in their criticisms of people for naming children in certain ways. Lavater condemns the practice of giving children heathen names (*Lavater* 155r). Topsell is particularly critical of the common practice of giving names whose meanings are no longer known, and the hostility he perceives towards those who name their children with names which have a clear meaning (80-1). Bernard correspondingly criticises the giving of both heathen names and names without sense or reason (*RR* 467-8). In seizing on the issue, raised by his predecessors, of the importance of giving

often, as we may see in *Leah* and *Rachel* <Gen. 29<sup>310</sup> and 30<sup>311</sup>>; so kinsfolke now and then, as wee may note out of Luke, chapter 1.58, 59. And here in *Ruth* the Neighbours gave it, yea, sometime a stranger named the child upon just occasion, as *Pharaoes* daughter did give the name of *Moses* to him, which the Parents did not alter;<sup>312</sup> so as it seemeth, this was not strictly stood upon, though most commonly the Parents gave the name. If any here aske concerning the time when children were named? I finde that it was sometime at the birth of the Infant, so *Rachel* and the wife of *Phineas* gave their children names upon their departure <Gen. 35.18; 1 Sam. 4.21>; but being in such cases, it seemeth not to be ordinary; it may be thought, to be usually at the time when the child was circumci- [p. 466] sed, as we may perceive at the naming of *Isaac*, and *John* the Baptist <Gen. 21.4;<sup>313</sup> Luke 1.59>. And thus doe wee give names at the baptizing of Infants, that as they did, so we may put children in minde of the Covenant made in Baptisme, of their badge of Christianity, and of their ingrafting into Christ, and how they were admitted as Gods children, into the household of faith, and as heires of the Kingdome of Heaven.

*There is a Sonne borne to Naomi.*] That is, for the good and comfort of *Naomi*, as is before shewed out of the fifteenth verse, and as may bee gathered by the like

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meaningful names, Bernard indicates how important this issue was to him in his role of a clergyman overseeing the godliness of his parishioners. Topsell precedes Bernard in noting those who performed the naming of children, maintaining that only in the case of Obed did the people help in it, supporting the duty of the godly (parents) to name so as to incite to godliness. This example should instruct the godly to help each other in the cause of religion (293-4). Topsell also touches on the issue of the time of naming, suggesting that Obed's naming was at his circumcision, as was John the Baptist's. Bernard also addresses the subject of naming in his exposition of Naomi changing her name to Marah in verses 20 and 21 of chapter 1. However, there he is not concerned with the naming of children. Rather he equates names with titles. For Naomi to be called Naomi (pleasant and merry) in her misery would be like an afflicted woman of rank being called lady or madam (121). His emphasis is on criticising those who pretend to titles they do not deserve.

<sup>310</sup> Specifically, verses 32-5.

<sup>311</sup> Specifically, verses 6, 8, 11, 13, 18, 20-1, 24.

<sup>312</sup> See Exod. 2.10.

<sup>313</sup> Verse 3 is also relevant.

phrase elsewhere <Isa. 9.6; Luke 2.11>. So as in these words is a reason of the name which they gave unto the child. Whence note, that *the godly in ancient time gave names not by hap-hazard, but as good reason did leade them thereunto*; for they gave names in obedience to Gods commandement, who appoynted sometimes names unto children <Gen. 17.19 and 21.3; Luke 1.13>; to knowe also whence they were, and whence taken. Thus *Adam* was so called of the matter whereof his body was made; so *Moses* of the place whence he was taken. Some had a name from their miserable estate and condition, as *Enosh*,<sup>314</sup> some, to call to remembrance some favours of God: thus *Simeon* was so called of his Mother *Leah*; and *Joseph* for the like reason called his sonnes, *Manasses* and *Ephraim* <Gen. 29<sup>315</sup> and 41.51-2>. Sometime names were given from some thing which fell out at the birth; hence *Pharez* had his name, and *Ichabod* his <Gen. 38.29; 1 Sam. 4<sup>316</sup>>. Some were named so from that which should come to passe afterwards, as *Salo-* [p. 467] *mon* was, for that in his daies should be rest and peace <1 Chron. 22.9>. Some had their names from some things to be effected and done by them, so was our Lord called *Jesus*, because hee should save his people from their sinnes <Matt. 9<sup>317</sup>>. Besides these inducements to impose a name, they did sometime call them after their Ancestors, to keepe them in remembrance <Luke 1.59, 61>. We must learne to imitate the holy men of God in these things; to expresse our own graces, or to teach our children some duties, or to call to minde the workes of God, or to remember holy men and

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<sup>314</sup> Bernard may have derived the significance he attaches to the name Enosh from such a source as Jerome. The name is explained in Alfred Jones, The proper names of the Old Testament scriptures expounded and illustrated (1856). According to this source, Enos, Enosh is taken from the root 'anash', to be incurable – of a wound, grief, sorrow, wickedness, sickness. 'While Adam refers only to his origin, the earth, this name, Enosh, man, bears witness to his frail and mortal nature. Adam before the fall, Enosh after it.' (115)

<sup>315</sup> Specifically, verse 33.

<sup>316</sup> Specifically, verse 21.

<sup>317</sup> Specifically, verse 13. 'Jesus' is the Greek form of the Hebrew name meaning 'God saves'.

women to imitate their vertues. And we may not thinke this to be too precise a practice, seeing Gods wisdome interposed it selfe sometime, both in giving names, and in changing of names; and the reverence due to the holy Sacrament administred, adviseth us to a due consideration hereof in honor of the Sacrament. And a good name may call sometimes a man to the remembrance of his duty. I knowe that a name maketh not a man good: for some have good names, but their conditions starke naught: yet a good name may sometime occasion a man to thinke of goodnesse; and howsoever the party so named doth make no use of it, yet it is commendable in the imposers thereof, who imitate the example of godly men in the old time, the Saints also in the Primitive Church, and the godly-disposed at this day. Which reprooveth such as give names idly without sense or reason, ridiculous names, Heathenish rather then Christian, and some [p. 468] such names as bee very prophane. But of this thus much.

*And they called his name Obed.*] That is, as they gave him his name, so thus was hee called: which words may imply, that the name once given, was with authority confirmed so, as the Infant was commonly so called without alteration: neither were ever any names altered, but upon some extraordinary occasion; for to suffer a change thereof, is either folly, or worse, if good and honest causes moove not thereunto.

*Obed.*] This signifieth *serving*, because hee should serve as a comforter to old *Naomi*, as the women said, verse 15, which is the reason of this name; to teach him, and also all *Children* their *duetie*, which is this, *to labour to be a comfort unto their Parents*: of which before in verse 15.<sup>318</sup> Now this they shall doe, if they live in

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<sup>318</sup> See pp. 454-6.

obedience to their Parents, with feare to offend, yeelding ever to bee ruled by them: if they seeke to imitate their Parents vertues, and to follow them in all good things: if they frame their courses to godlinesse, striving to have an Heavenly Father also for their guide and direction: if they settle themselves to a good course of life, to live within some honest calling, either in the Church or Common-wealth: if lastly, they live in mutuall love one with another, like *Jobs* children. These things will comfort Parents; which therefore let children labour for; let them bee *Obeds*, serving thus to their comforts; let them bee [p. 469] *Isaacs*, to make their Parents to laugh for joy;<sup>319</sup> and not *Benonies*, Sonnes of sorrow,<sup>320</sup> like *Cains*, *Esaus* and *Absaloms*, wicked, prophane and unnaturall.

Note here one thing more, before I come to the next words, how that this child is not called either *Elimelech* or *Mahlon*; and yet was he given to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that might not be cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place <Verse 10>; and for this end did *Boaz* marry *Ruth*. Whence therefore we may perceive, that the preservation of the name of the dead stood not in anothers bearing of his name, so to be called, as he was; but rather in the issue having a right to the inheritance and injoying of it, that it might not bee alienated from the kindred and stocke of the dead: which being so, sheweth the grosse folly and wrong which some shew to their neere blood, in disinheriting daughters, and passing their inheritance unto meere strangers for a very bare name; as if that were to hold up their name, when oftentimes it commeth to passe, that such sell away the inheritance, and so roote out their name, which is better kept by continuing an inheritance in their blood and bowels, then by the sound of a word

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<sup>319</sup> See Gen. 21.6.

<sup>320</sup> See Gen. 35.18. He was a cause of sorrow only because his mother died in childbirth.

upon the person of a stranger: this folly we see by examples to be condemned and cursed before our eyes, in not a few.

*Hee is the Father of Jesse, the Father of David.*] These words are added to shew, first, who this [p. 470] *Obed* was, or rather what a one he came to be in his posteritie, even very honorable and of high renowne. Here wee see, that *as Ancestors may grace posteritie, so honorable ofspring may grace Ancestors and forefathers*. Againe, by these words we understand when this Story was written, even in the daies of *David*, and that also when he was chosen of God from his brethren; for else *Jesse* his eldest sonne should have been named, and not *David*, who was the seventh and youngest sonne of his Father. Thirdly, these words shew whereto this History tendeth, to bring us unto *David*, that sweet singer of Israel, the chiefe type of *Jesus Christ*, the Saviour not onely of the Jewes, but likewise of the Gentiles, of whom he was pleased to come, to be their Saviour also, as it appeareth to us at this day, blessed be God for ever. Amen.

Verse 18. *Now these are the generations of Pharez; Pharez begat Ram.*<sup>321</sup>

Here is the last part of this booke, and the conclusion of this chapter, containing a genealogie from *Pharez* to *David*, ten generations, as they be reckoned in order, in this and the rest of the verses from the father to the sonne, and from the sonne to the end of the tenth generation. The occasion of this genealogie was from the last words of the former verse, speaking of *Obeds* being father to *Jesse*, and Grand-father to *David*; and to shew this, the holy Ghost begin- [p. 471] neth a

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<sup>321</sup> This is an error. Pharez begat Hezron.



genealogie from before *Obeds* time, in seven of his Ancestors, and descended to *David* his Grand-child.

*Now these are the generations.*] Usually the genealogies of the godly are recorded, but sometime the generation of the wicked, as of *Ismael* and *Esau*, are set downe; not so much for their sakes, as to shew the truth of Gods promises made to the faithfull concerning some of them: or to shew some wicked instruments in their posteritie, as in the genealogie of *Cain* <Gen. 25.13<sup>322</sup> and 36.9<sup>323</sup> and 21.13 and 4.17-19<sup>324</sup>>. The genealogie of the godly is set downe for these ends. First, to shew how God registreth up his people in a booke of remembrance, as being precious in his eyes. Secondly, to shew how hee hath had from time to time thorowout all ages, a race of righteous people, a peculiar generation to himselfe, in despite of Satans malice and all his bloody instruments. Thirdly, for helpe to Chronologie, as may bee seene in Gen. 5 from the lives of the Patriarkes. Fourthly, to shew the descent from the first *Adam* to the second, as appeareth in the Evangelists; where *Matthew* intitlith his first Chapter, the booke of the Generation of Jesus Christ, from *Abraham* to *Joseph* <Matt. 1<sup>325</sup>>, and then *Luke* from *Joseph* to *Adam* <Luke 3<sup>326</sup>>. This genealogie here in *Ruth* is, to teach the truth of *Jacobs* prophecie, concerning Christs comming of the Tribe of *Judah*,<sup>327</sup> for here it beginneth at *Pharez Judahs* sonne, and descendeth to *David*, the royall Prophet and type of Christ: Also to shew why the house of *Pharez* was so extolled in verse 12 [p. 472] by the Elders and people: and thirdly, to let us know for what end this Story was written, not to praise and set out

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<sup>322</sup> Verses 12-16 are relevant.

<sup>323</sup> The whole chapter is relevant.

<sup>324</sup> Verses 20-4 are also relevant.

<sup>325</sup> Specifically, verses 1-17.

<sup>326</sup> Specifically, verses 23-38.

<sup>327</sup> See Gen. 49.10.

the vertues of a couple of poore women; but to shew from whom *David* came, the figure of Christ, even of *Ruth*, a Gentile, a Moabitesse. Lastly, this may bee, to shew the efficacie of the prayer of the people at *Boaz* marriage, wishing by this seede *Obed* his house to bee as famous as *Judahs* house was by *Pharez*, as it was indeed. For as *Nahshon* and *Salmon*, Princes came of him,<sup>328</sup> so of this *Obed* came *Jesse* and *David*, and so a royall posteritie.

*Of Pharez.*] The Catalogue beginneth here, and from this man, though misbegotten incestuously, the honour of the families is fetched; for so in truth it was, the Lord making *Pharez* renowned in his posterity: whence note, First, that the *holy Writers are without partialitie*, they write as things be; they omit not for feare of disgrace that which is true, and ought to bee set downe; they will not spare any, friend, foe, farre off, nor neere, no not themselves; *Moses* will write his owne faults, his Wives, his Brother *Aarons* and *Miriams*; *Samuel* will not slip over his sonnes miscarriage; nor *Jonah* his owne rebellion against God, and his peevish brabbling with him; *Jeremie* will record his owne impatiencie, and Saint *Paul* his bloody rage against the Saints: for indeed they are led by a better Spirit, then that of the world; they also cast off selfe-love, and they prefer the truth and Gods glo- [p. 473] rie above all: which may perswade us to the reading of these holy Histories full of varieties, and yet trueths not to bee found in any writings of men. And this should teach such as undertake to write Stories, to deale truely, without fabling, and to avoide partiall relations, that wee may reade true Histories, and not fictions and falsehoods, to the deceiving of the posteritie, which should bee thereby instructed.<sup>329</sup>

<sup>328</sup> Nahshon is described as a prince in 1 Chron. 2.10. Lavater describes Salmon as a prince (160v; the page number is misprinted as 159).

<sup>329</sup> *Nam quis nescit, primam esse historiae legem, ne quid falsi dicere audeat, deinde, ne quid veri non audeat, ne qua suspicio gratiae sit in scribendo, ne qua simultatis? Cicero, de Oratore, liber 2.*

*Vide Josephum, Antiquitates, liber 16, caput 11, ubi merito culpat Nicholas Damasceni*

Secondly, that *men hold themselves honored to come of such as have gained honour in the world, though otherwise stained in their birth*: for so here it is accounted honorable to come of *Pharez*, as many with us doe; to come but into this Iland, which *William the Conquerour* obtained, how base so ever he was by his birth: for outward honour and glory procureth estimation, and becloudeth birth so, as that no notice is taken thereof. Now, if outward honor effect this, with what honour may we thinke our selves honoured, when God, the Emperor of Heaven and earth, is willing to acknowledge us to bee borne of him, and to bee called his Sonnes? But of this, few glory, because it is onely spiritually discerned, and for that such as bee so honoured with God, finde here many crosses, and so are in contempt with the worldly-minded.

Now, in handling the rest of the names, I will shew you out of them, that as one naturally begets another; so the Elect of God are to be qualified, one grace, as it were, producing another. The first in this naturall generation is *Pharez*, [p. 474] which signifieth *separate*: so in the supernaturall worke of Regeneration, the Elect must bee first *Pharez*, separate by their effectuall calling by the Word, and by the holy Spirit in their conversation from the vaine world; for such are the Children of God, and such ought they to bee, as the Apostle exhorteth <2 Cor. 6.17; Eph. 5.11>,

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*historiam, Herodis res falsis laudibus ornantem.* [B]

[For who does not know history's first law to be that an author must not dare to tell anything but the truth? And its second that he must make bold to tell the whole truth? That there must be no suspicion of partiality anywhere in his writings? Nor of malice?

See book 16 chapter 11 of Josephus' Antiquities of the Jews, when he deservedly blames the history of Nicholas of Damascus for adorning the deeds of Herod with false praise.]

This translation of Cicero is by E.W. Sutton, De Oratore 2.62, pp. 242-5. The paragraph relating to Josephus is translated by David Mealand (Edinburgh University).

The reference given to Josephus' Antiquities of the Jews as book 16 chapter 11 should be book 16 chapter 7, where Josephus accuses his predecessor in writing the history of Herod, Nicholas Damascenus, of being unduly partial to that king, in whose reign he wrote, 'touching upon nothing but what tended to his glory, and openly excusing many of his notorious crimes, and very diligently concealing them'. (Josephus [Whiston] 341)

else wee bee not of this spirituall Regeneration. Such then as are companions with wicked, and so live, they are no *Pharezes*, and so none of Christs line.

*Pharez begate Hezron* <Verse 19<sup>330</sup>>.] So is it plaine, Gen. 46.12; Matt. 1.3; 1 Chron. 2.5, who went downe with *Jacob* into Egypt <Gen. 46.26<sup>331</sup>>, contrary to the opinion of some Popish writers: the name signifieth, *in the midst of gladnesse*; and such bee the Elect, after they become *Pharezes*, they must needs be *Hezrons*, full of joy, when they feele the benefit of their separation, they are a glad people, even as the Israelites separated from the Egyptians and their heavy bondage.

*Hezron begate Ram.*] 1 Chron. 2.9; Matt. 1.<sup>332</sup> This *Ram* or *Aram* was not *Hezrons* first borne, but *Jerahmeel*; to give us to know, that the Lord tyed not himselfe to the first borne, but he chose sometime the second, as here, and sometime the youngest, as *David*: and so he doth at this day; which is the cause of the difference of Children from one Father and one Mother, having the same education, some doing well, other some ill. The name signifieth *high*: for so are the Elect with God <Deut. 32.10; Zech. 2.8>, and being once *Hezrons*, joyfull in [p. 475] the waies of God, they seeke and set their mindes on things above, as the Apostle exhorts all risen with Christ to doe <Col. 3.1>. They be not base-minded, to pore upon the world, as Earth-wormes, but are high-minded towards God and things above; they are of a generous spirit, not suffering the things below to tread downe their affections, and to draw them from God.

*Ram begate Aminadab.*] 1 Chron. 2.10; Matt. 1.<sup>333</sup> He was Father in law to *Aaron*, who married his daughter *Elishebah* <Exod. 6.23>; this name signifieth *my*

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<sup>330</sup> The correct reference is verse 18.

<sup>331</sup> The correct reference is Gen. 46.12.

<sup>332</sup> Specifically, verse 3.

<sup>333</sup> Specifically, verse 4.

*people is noble, or free, and so are the Elect: for having attain'd to this height, that they become Rams, or Arams, they free themselves from the world, as far as it hindereth them from setting their minds on things above.*

*And Aminadab begate Nahshon* <Verse 20>.] 1 Chron. 2;<sup>334</sup> Matt. 1.<sup>335</sup> Who was brother in law to *Aaron*, the head and Prince of the Tribe of *Judah* <Num. 1.7 and 2.3 and 7.12>; which host consisted of 74600 valiant men, the first Standerd.<sup>336</sup> This first offered to the dedication of the Altar: *For the greatest should be the forwardest to Gods service, and to advance Religion.* This also first set forward with his charge towards Canaan <Num. 10.14>: so should the greatest with their families set forward to Heaven. This signifieth *experiment* or *triall*; for the Elect of God having gotten to bee *Aminadabs*, and become free, they taste of the Lords goodnesse, and can say with *David*; *Come and see what the Lord hath done for my soule.* They keepe in remembrance the kind- [p. 476] nesse of the Lord, and can speake of his noble acts.

*And Nahshon begate Salmon*,] 1 Chron. 2.11, where he is called *Salma*: he married *Rahab*, Matt. 1.5. Thus in the Line of Christ are brought in Gentiles, for our comfort, of whom he came, as well as of the Jewes; and is our kinsman, as well as theirs. This signifieth *peaceable*, and so are the Elect: for after they become *Nahshons*, experienced in Gods goodnesse, they have a peaceable conscience, they have a quiet minde, without murmuring, without doubting, without gaine-saying the will of God in any thing, which may happen, though it crosse them in this world never so much, they bee peaceable also towards others, because the wisdom from

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<sup>334</sup> Specifically, verse 10.

<sup>335</sup> Specifically, verse 4.

<sup>336</sup> For the figure of 74,600 valiant men see Num. 1.27 and 2.4. Bernard bases his account of Old Testament military strategy in *Bible-Battells* (1629) on such statistics.

above, with which they are indued, is peaceable <Jas. 3.17>.

*And Salmon begate Boaz* <Verse 21>,) 1 Chron. 2.11, of whom I have spoken before.<sup>337</sup> It signifieth *in strength*: for when the Elect are *Salmons*, that they finde inward peace with God, and that they know God to bee with them, then they say to their soules, as the Angell to *Gideon*, Goe in this thy strength: for in the Lord they are valiant, and by his helpe may doe worthily, being confident in God.

*And Boaz begate Obed.*] 1 Chron. 2;<sup>338</sup> Matt. 1.<sup>339</sup> Of this also before.<sup>340</sup> It signifieth *serving*: such are the Lords Elect, they are his servants: for when God hath made them *Boazes*, and put strength of grace into their hearts to withstand their spiri-  
[p. 477] tuall adversaries, they wil become obedient *Obeds*.

*And Obed begate Jesse* <Verse 22>,) 1 Chron. 2.13;<sup>341</sup> Matt. 1,<sup>342</sup> who dwelt at Bethlehem, and was an ancient man in the dayes of *Saul* <1 Sam. 16.1>. This signifieth *a gift or offering*: and such bee all true *Obeds*, when the elect become serviceable and obedient, the joy they feele in the Lords service, maketh them *Jesses*, even to offer themselves to God, as holy and acceptable sacrifices <Rom. 12.1>.

*And Jesse begate David.*] 1 Chron. 2.13, 15; Matt. 1.<sup>343</sup> Of this Kingly Prophet and propheticall King, I might speake more at large, then might seeme sutable to this brieve exposition: I therefore referre you to the Bookes of *Samuel*, and the first of the Kings, and the first of the Chronicles, and to the Booke of Psalmes, which lively set out this holy man, a man after the Lords owne heart. His name signifieth *beloved*: and such are the Lords Elect; and they may know themselves to

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<sup>337</sup> See p. 131.

<sup>338</sup> Specifically, verse 12.

<sup>339</sup> Specifically, verse 5.

<sup>340</sup> See p. 468.

<sup>341</sup> The correct reference is 1 Chron. 2.12.

<sup>342</sup> Specifically, verse 5.

<sup>343</sup> Specifically, verse 6.

be so, God witnessing his love to them: for when they bee once *Pharez*, separated from the vaine world; *Hezrons*, joyfull and glad in this their separation; *Ram's*, lifted up in mind to heavenly things; *Aminadabs*, a free people from spirituall thralldome, having gotten the Spirit of Adoption; *Nahshons*, experienced in Gods love; *Salmons*, peaceable; and *Boazes*, going on in this their strength; and *Obeds*, obedient; and that freely, as *Jesses*: what doubt is there, but that they bee *Davids*, even beloved of God?

To conclude this Chapter, and so this whole History, we may here see, how *from a meane estate, [p. 478] some can arise to great honour*: as *Ruth* from gleaning, to be the wife of *Boaz*, and the Grand-mother of a King and Prophet. Thus poore *Mordecai* was exalted, and that on a suddaine, from sack-cloth into silken Robes fit for a King; from feare and danger of death, to great honor, and to be feared. And thus came *Joseph* from a prison, to be a Prince in Egypt; and *David* from keeping sheepe, to bee the King of Israel: all which is the worke of God, as *Hannah* singeth, *David* publisheth, and *Daniel* teacheth <1 Sam. 2.8; Ps. 75.6-7 and 113.7; Dan. 4.17>. It is easie with the Lord, suddainely to make a poore man rich, and to exalt him to honour. And therefore let such as be low, not envie the advancement of others lifted up; it is of God; and let them not repine, nor murmure to see themselves neglected: for if God held it good for such, and for his glory, to be lifted up, as he can do it: so verily, he would do it, as well as he doth others: for God respecteth no person, but doth what hee pleaseth in heaven and in earth, and what is most for his glory, though we judge, perhaps, otherwise. Another thing may wee note for the comfort of the godly, *That great is the reward of Religion*. *Ruth* was of the Lord mercifully rewarded, as we have heard; so was *Rahab* by faith preserved, and all with her, brought from among cursed Canaanites, to bee among the Israelites; yea, to

become the wife of *Salmon* a Prince in Israel: and lastly, to be vouchsafed this mercy, to bee recorded with the faithfull in the Catalogue of the most Renowned, yea, and to be mentioned with *Abraham*, for her good works, [p. 479] the fruit of true faith <Heb. 11,<sup>344</sup> Jas. 2<sup>345</sup>>. What got *David* for his upright heart, though he seemed to be neglected of his parents, and sent to keepe sheepe, and not called to the Feast, till *Samuel* caused him to bee sent for? Was not hee for all that, esteemed of God, and chosen before all his brethren? The Lord will not let goodnesse be unrewarded: for godlinesse hath the promise of this life, and of the Life to come. And in this, let all that truely feare God, comfort themselves, and looke up to the recompence of the reward, which in due time they shall receive to the full, if they faint not.

Blessed be God, and his Name be praised for evermore.

*Amen.*

*FINIS.*

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<sup>344</sup> Specifically, verse 31.

<sup>345</sup> Specifically, verse 25.



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